



GUZ 05

Deuteronomy

Bible Commentary:
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David Guzik

David Guzik's Commentary On
05 Deuteronomy
Biblical Text – TEV (Good News Bible)

The Command to Leave Horeb

Deu 1:1 In this book are the words that Moses spoke to the people of Israel when they were in the wilderness east of the Jordan River. They were in the Jordan Valley near Suph, between the town of Paran on one side and the towns of Tophel, Laban, Hazeroth, and Dizahab on the other.

Deu 1:2 (It takes eleven days to travel from Mount Sinai to Kadesh Barnea by way of the hill country of Edom.)

Deu 1:3 On the first day of the eleventh month of the fortieth year after they had left Egypt, Moses told the people everything the LORD had commanded him to tell them.

Deu 1:4 This was after the LORD had defeated King Sihon of the Amorites, who ruled in the town of Heshbon, and King Og of Bashan, who ruled in the towns of Ashtaroth and Edrei.

Deu 1:5 It was while the people were east of the Jordan in the territory of Moab that Moses began to explain God's laws and teachings. He said,

Deu 1:6 "When we were at Mount Sinai, the LORD our God said to us, 'You have stayed long enough at this mountain.

Deu 1:7 Break camp and move on. Go to the hill country of the Amorites and to all the surrounding regions—to the Jordan Valley, to the hill country and the lowlands, to the southern region, and to the Mediterranean coast. Go to the land of Canaan and on beyond the Lebanon Mountains as far as the great Euphrates River.

Deu 1:8 All of this is the land which I, the LORD, promised to give to your ancestors, Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, and to their descendants. Go and occupy it.' "

Leaders Appointed

Deu 1:9 Moses said to the people, "While we were still at Mount Sinai, I told you, 'The responsibility for leading you is too much for me. I can't do it alone.

Deu 1:10 The LORD your God has made you as numerous as the stars in the sky.

Deu 1:11 May the LORD, the God of your ancestors, make you increase a thousand times more and make you prosperous, as he promised!

Deu 1:12 But how can I alone bear the heavy responsibility for settling your disputes?

Deu 1:13 Choose some wise, understanding, and experienced men from each tribe, and I will put them in charge of you.'

Deu 1:14 And you agreed that this was a good thing to do.

Deu 1:15 So I took the wise and experienced leaders you chose from your tribes, and I placed them in charge of you. Some were responsible for a thousand people, some for a hundred, some for fifty, and some for ten. I also appointed other officials throughout the tribes.

Deu 1:16 "At that time I instructed them, 'Listen to the disputes that come up among your people. Judge every dispute fairly, whether it concerns only your own people or involves foreigners who live among you.

Deu 1:17 Show no partiality in your decisions; judge everyone on the same basis, no matter who they are. Do not be afraid of anyone, for the decisions you make come from God. If any case is too difficult for you, bring it to me, and I will decide it.'

Deu 1:18 At the same time I gave you instructions for everything else you were to do.

Israel's Refusal to Enter the Land

Deu 1:19 "We did what the LORD our God commanded us. We left Mount Sinai and went through that vast and fearful desert on the way to the hill country of the Amorites. When we reached Kadesh Barnea,

Deu 1:20 (20-21) I told you, 'You have now come to the hill country of the Amorites, which the LORD our God, the God of our ancestors, is giving us. Look, there it is. Go and occupy it as he commanded. Do not hesitate or be afraid.'

Deu 1:22 "But you came to me and said, 'Let's send men ahead of us to spy out the land, so that they can tell us the best route to take and what kind of cities are there.'

Deu 1:23 "That seemed like a good thing to do, so I selected twelve men, one from each tribe.

Deu 1:24 They went into the hill country as far as Eshcol Valley and explored it.

Deu 1:25 They brought us back some fruit they found there, and reported that the land which the LORD our God was giving us was very fertile.

Deu 1:26 "But you rebelled against the command of the LORD your God, and you would not enter the land.

Deu 1:27 You grumbled to one another: 'The LORD hates us. He brought us out of Egypt just to hand us over to these Amorites, so that they could kill us.'

Deu 1:28 Why should we go there? We are afraid. The men we sent tell us that the people there are stronger and taller than we are, and that they live in cities with walls that reach the sky. They saw giants there!"

Deu 1:29 "But I told you, 'Don't be afraid of those people.'

Deu 1:30 The LORD your God will lead you, and he will fight for you, just as you saw him do in Egypt

Deu 1:31 and in the desert. You saw how he brought you safely all the way to this place, just as a father would carry his son.'

Deu 1:32 But in spite of what I said, you still would not trust the LORD,

Deu 1:33 even though he always went ahead of you to find a place for you to camp. To show you the way, he went in front of you in a pillar of fire by night and in a pillar of cloud by day.

The Penalty for Israel's Rebellion

Deu 1:34 "The LORD heard your complaints and became angry, and so he solemnly declared,

Deu 1:35 'Not one of you from this evil generation will enter the fertile land that I promised to give your ancestors.

Deu 1:36 Only Caleb son of Jephunneh will enter it. He has remained faithful to me, and I will give him and his descendants the land that he has explored.'

Deu 1:37 Because of you the LORD also became angry with me and said, 'Not even you, Moses, will enter the land.

Deu 1:38 But strengthen the determination of your helper, Joshua son of Nun. He will lead Israel to occupy the land.'

Deu 1:39 "Then the LORD said to all of us, 'Your children, who are still too young to know right from wrong, will enter the land—the children you said would be seized by your enemies. I will give the land to them, and they will occupy it.

Deu 1:40 But as for you people, turn around and go back into the desert on the road to the Gulf of Aqaba.'

Deu 1:41 "You replied, 'Moses, we have sinned against the LORD. But now we will attack, just as the LORD our God commanded us.' Then each one of you got ready to fight, thinking it would be easy to invade the hill country.

Deu 1:42 "But the LORD said to me, 'Warn them not to attack, for I will not be with them, and their enemies will defeat them.'

Deu 1:43 I told you what the LORD had said, but you paid no attention. You rebelled against him, and in your pride you marched into the hill country.

Deu 1:44 Then the Amorites who lived in those hills came out against you like a swarm of bees. They chased you as far as Hormah and defeated you there in the hill country of Edom.

Deu 1:45 So you cried out to the LORD for help, but he would not listen to you or pay any attention to you.

Deu 1:46 "So then, after we had stayed at Kadesh for a long time,

Deuteronomy 1:1-46

Deuteronomy 1 - Moses Remembers the Journey of Israel from Mount Sinai to Kadesh Barnea

A. Introduction; Moses remembers the departure from Mount Sinai (Horeb).

1. (1) *These are the words.*

These are the words which Moses spoke to all Israel on this side of the Jordan in the wilderness, in the plain opposite Suph, between Paran, Tophel, Laban, Hazeroth, and Dizahab.

a. **On this side of the Jordan:** At this point Israel was camped on the great plains of Moab, able to see across the Jordan River into the Promised Land. This was the land of Canaan that God promised them but which they had not occupied for 400 years.

b. **In the wilderness:** They had come through a long, and difficult journey from Egypt - made all the more long

and difficult because of their unbelief and the death of the adult generation which first came out of Egypt.

c. **These are the words which Moses spoke to all Israel:**

At this pivotal point in Israel's history - on the threshold of the Promised Land, and ready to adopt a true national identity, Moses spoke to Israel in this book of Deuteronomy.

i. The name *Deuteronomy* means "second law." It was the second giving of the Mosaic Law, the first being at Mount Sinai. Moses felt compelled to bring this reminder of the Law to Israel, because those ready to enter the Promised Land were only children - if born at all - when the Law was originally given at Mount Sinai.

d. **Which Moses spoke to all Israel:** Essentially, the Book of Deuteronomy was a sermon - or a series of sermons, preached by Moses to Israel, and preached with a heavy and passionate heart.

i. Moses' heart was heavy because he knew that he would not enter the Promised Land of Canaan with Israel. His disobedience to God at Meribah (Num 20:1-13) meant that he would not see Israel's exodus from Egypt through to completion.

ii. Moses' heart was passionate because he knew that if this new generation - a generation of faith, unlike the generation which perished in the wilderness - if this new generation did not obey the Law of God, then God's covenant would work against them and curse them. So, the LORD passionately pled through a passionate Moses in Deuteronomy, pleading for Israel to *choose life!* (Deu 30:19)

iii. Deuteronomy is therefore a book of reminding and a book of preparation. We never outgrow our need to

be reminded, as Peter said, *I will not be negligent to remind you always of these things, though you know and are established in the present truth.* (2Pe 1:12)

e. **Moses spoke to all Israel... in the wilderness:**

Deuteronomy is also a book of note, because it was a useful book of reminder and preparation for Jesus. In His temptation in the wilderness, it seems obvious that Jesus meditated on Deuteronomy because in answering Satan, He quoted from it three times. Deuteronomy was a precious book to Jesus and it was used to prepare Him to be used of God. We should not think any less of it.

- i. When tempted by Satan to use His divine powers to turn stone into bread, Jesus answered Satan from Deu 8:3 : *man shall not live by bread alone; but man lives by every word that proceeds from the mouth of the Lord.*
- ii. When tempted by Satan to tempt God the Father into demonstrating Jesus as Messiah before it was time, Jesus answered Satan from Deu 6:16 : *You shall not tempt the Lord your God.*
- iii. When tempted by Satan to short-cut the cross by bowing down to worship the devil, Jesus answered Satan from Deu 6:13 : *You shall fear the Lord your God and serve Him.*
- iv. "Deuteronomy is one of the greatest books of the Old Testament. Its influence on the domestic and personal religion of all ages has not been surpassed by any other book in the Bible. It is quoted over eighty times in the New Testament and this it belongs to a small group of four Old Testament books [the others being Genesis, Psalms, and Isaiah] to which the early Christians made frequent reference." (Thompson)

2. (2-4) The journey from Mount Horeb to Kadesh Barnea.

It is eleven days' journey from Horeb by way of Mount Seir to Kadesh Barnea. Now it came to pass in the fortieth year, in the eleventh month, on the first day of the month, that Moses spoke to the children of Israel according to all that the LORD had given him as commandments to them, after he had killed Sihon king of the Amorites, who dwelt in Heshbon, and Og king of Bashan, who dwelt at Ashtaroth in Edrei.

a. **Kadesh Barnea:** This was the place where, in Numbers 13, 14, Israel believed the report of the unfaithful spies and rebelled against God, refusing to go into the Promised Land.

b. **It is eleven days' journey from Horeb by way of Mount Seir to Kadesh Barnea:** The journey from Mount Horeb to Kadesh Barnea only took eleven days. But from Kadesh Barnea (the threshold of the Promised Land) back to Kadesh Barnea (back to the threshold of the Promised Land) took forty years.

i. This was because it took forty years for the generation of unbelief - those who were adults when Israel left Egypt - it took forty years for that generation to die out in the wilderness, and for a generation of faith and trust in God to arise in place after them.

c. **After he had killed Sihon king of the Amorites... and Og king of Bashan:** Israel's great fear when they first came to Kadesh Barnea and the opportunity to enter the Promised Land was that they would be crushed by the military prowess of the Canaanites. But when the new generation trusted God and went forward, God immediately gave them victory – over two pagan kings (**Sihon** and **Og**). The victory was ready as soon as Israel was ready to receive it in faith.

3. (5) *Moses the expositor.*

On this side of the Jordan in the land of Moab, Moses began to explain this law, saying,

- a. **On this side of the Jordan:** This was one of the last things Moses did to prepare the people of Israel to finally enter into the Promised Land. Moses knew they needed to know the Word.
- b. **Moses began to explain this law:** Moses will now serve as an expository teacher to Israel. The Hebrew word translated “**explain**” comes from the ideas “to dig deeply” or “to mine.” Moses will mine out the riches of God’s truth to the people, and prepare them to enter in.

4. (6-8) *The command to move on from Mount Horeb.*

“The LORD our God spoke to us in Horeb, saying: ‘You have dwelt long enough at this mountain. Turn and take your journey, and go to the mountains of the Amorites, to all the neighboring places in the plain, in the mountains and in the lowland, in the South and on the seacoast, to the land of the Canaanites and to Lebanon, as far as the great river, the River Euphrates. See, I have set the land before you; go in and possess the land which the LORD swore to your fathers; to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob; to give to them and their descendants after them.’”

- a. **The LORD our God spoke to us in Horeb:** This departure from Mount Sinai (**Horeb** and *Sinai* are different names for the same place) was recorded in Numbers 10. However, the Numbers 10 account does not give us the details recorded here.
- b. **You have dwelt long enough at this mountain:** Simply, God told Israel to move on. A year at Mount Sinai was enough; He did not bring them out of Egypt for

them to live forever at Sinai. It was time to move on in faith and take the land of promise.

i. Galatians 4 and Hebrews 12 symbolically identify Mount Sinai with the Old Covenant of works and law. For the Christian today, it is important to spend *some* time under the law as a tutor (Gal 3:24-25), so we know the holy character of God and our need for a Savior. But God never intended the Christian to live their spiritual life at Mount Sinai. The believer must move on in faith to the Promised Land.

c. **Turn and take your journey... See, I have set the land before you:** Though it would be a challenge, God had set the Promised Land before Israel - and Moses here remembered when He spoke to them at Sinai and told them to move on and take the land.

5. (9-18) *When Moses appointed judges among Israel.*

"And I spoke to you at that time, saying: 'I alone am not able to bear you. The LORD your God has multiplied you, and here you are today, as the stars of heaven in multitude. May the LORD God of your fathers make you a thousand times more numerous than you are, and bless you as He has promised you! How can I alone bear your problems and your burdens and your complaints? Choose wise, understanding, and knowledgeable men from among your tribes, and I will make them heads over you.' And you answered me and said, 'The thing which you have told us to do is good.' So I took the heads of your tribes, wise and knowledgeable men, and made them heads over you, leaders of thousands, leaders of hundreds, leaders of fifties, leaders of tens, and officers for your tribes. Then I commanded your judges at that time, saying, 'Hear the cases between your brethren, and judge righteously between a man

and his brother or the stranger who is with him. You shall not show partiality in judgment; you shall hear the small as well as the great; you shall not be afraid in any man's presence, for the judgment is God's. The case that is too hard for you, bring to me, and I will hear it.' And I commanded you at that time all the things which you should do."

a. **Choose wise, understanding, and knowledgeable men from among your tribes, and I will make them heads over you:** Some think that the appointment of leaders described in Deuteronomy 1 referred to the appointment of Judges in Exodus 18. Some others believe it refers tp the appointment of elders described in Numbers 11. It could possibly be either, but from the flow of Moses' context in Deuteronomy 1, it seems best to consider that it was the appointment of elders in Numbers 11.

b. **I alone am not able to bear you:** Moses experienced this crisis in Numbers 11 when the people complained again about the food God provided. To help Moses bear the burden, God directed him to appoint seventy elders to assist him in bearing up under the pressure of leading the nation.

i. As described in Numbers 11, these elders had a precious function: To

*stand there with Moses (Num 11:16), to have the same *Spirit* as Moses, and to *bear the burden of the people with Moses (Num 11:17)*.*

c. **So I took the heads of your tribes, wise and knowledgeable men, and made them heads over you:** Moses chose the elders of Israel by using a combination of approval by the congregation, and approval by Moses himself. Moses then instructed the

elders in principles of righteous leadership, and thus relieved himself of many burdens.

B. Moses remembers when in unbelief, Israel refused to enter the Promised Land.

1. (19-21) *Moses remembers his exhortation to Israel at Kadesh Barnea.*

"So we departed from Horeb, and went through all that great and terrible wilderness which you saw on the way to the mountains of the Amorites, as the LORD our God had commanded us. Then we came to Kadesh Barnea. And I said to you, 'You have come to the mountains of the Amorites, which the LORD our God is giving us. Look, the LORD your God has set the land before you; go up and possess it, as the LORD God of your fathers has spoken to you; do not fear or be discouraged.'"

a. **Look, the LORD your God has set the land before you; go up and possess it:** After seeing God's faithfulness in enabling them to cross the land of the Amorites, Moses was ready to lead the nation into Canaan.

b. **Do not fear or be discouraged:** This encouragement was important because this was the critical moment for Israel. They were a little more than a year out of Egypt and ready to go into the Promised Land. It was there before them, ready for them to take by faith if they would not **fear or be discouraged**.

2. (22-23) *Moses remembers Israel's suggestion to send forth spies.*

"And everyone of you came near to me and said, 'Let us send men before us, and let them search out the land for us, and bring back word to us of the way by which we should go up, and of the cities into which

'we shall come.' The plan pleased me well; so I took twelve of your men, one man from each tribe."

a. **And everyone of you came near to me and said, "Let us send men before us":** As Moses remembered this suggestion, he looked back with regret. There really was no compelling reason to send forth spies into the Promised Land.

i. God had told them that the land was good. Unless they did not believe Him, there was no reason to confirm it on their own. God had told them they would take the land and defeat the nations living there. Unless they did not believe Him, there was no reason to take a look at the enemies and see if God was somehow up to the challenge.

b. **And the plan pleased me well:** Moses must have had regret as he remembered this. The people suggested it and Moses agreed to it. Yet when ten of the twelve spies came back with a report filled with fear and unbelief, the nation believed them and refused to believe God's promised and enter in.

i. From reading only Num 13:2 it might seem that this plan to send spies into Canaan originated with God, not the people. But a careful look shows that Num 13:2 dealt mainly with the number of spies to send (12) and how they should be chosen (one from each tribe). So though the plan did not originate with God (Deuteronomy 1 indicates that it started with the people, and was approved by Moses), the LORD essentially said: "If you are going to send spies, send twelve, and have them represent the whole nation by sending one from each tribe."

ii. Perhaps in this God made certain that not *all* the spies brought a report of unbelief.

3. (24-25) Moses remembers the journey and report of the spies.

"And they departed and went up into the mountains, and came to the Valley of Eshcol, and spied it out. They also took *some* of the fruit of the land in their hands and brought *it* down to us; and they brought back word to us, saying, '*It is* a good land which the LORD our God is giving us."

a. **They brought back word to us:** Significantly, Moses didn't mention the evil report of the unbelieving spies (Num 13:28-29). It is almost as if the memory was so painful that Moses wouldn't even deal with it.

b. **It is a good land which the LORD our God is giving us:** It was enough that the nation of Israel had the report from the godly spies, Joshua and Caleb. In addition to that, *all* the twelve spies were united on saying "*It is a good land which the LORD our God is giving us*" (Num 13:27).

4. (26-33) Moses remembers Israel's unbelieving rejection of the Promised Land, though he pleaded with them to take the land in faith.

"Nevertheless you would not go up, but rebelled against the command of the LORD your God; and you complained in your tents, and said, 'Because the LORD hates us, He has brought us out of the land of Egypt to deliver us into the hand of the Amorites, to destroy us. Where can we go up? Our brethren have discouraged our hearts, saying, "The people are greater and taller than we; the cities are great and fortified up to heaven; moreover we have seen the sons of the Anakim there." Then I said to you, 'Do not be terrified, or afraid of them. The LORD your God, who goes before you, He will fight for you, according to all He did for you in Egypt before your

eyes, and in the wilderness where you saw how the LORD your God carried you, as a man carries his son, in all the way that you went until you came to this place.' Yet, for all that, you did not believe the LORD your God, who went in the way before you to search out a place for you to pitch your tents, to show you the way you should go, in the fire by night and in the cloud by day."

a. **Nevertheless:** In this context, this is a haunting word. It was the exact word in the mouth of the ten fearful spies when they began to give an evil testimony to Israel (Num 13:28).

i. Essentially, the ten spies and all Israel said, "We went into the land of Canaan and found it to be a wonderful land, just as the LORD said it would be. God's word was true on that point. **Nevertheless** (essentially saying, 'despite all that'), we don't believe God when He says He will enable to overcome the enemies of the land and to possess it."

ii. *Nevertheless!* Despite the fact we have seen that God's word is true, we will not trust Him for great things in the future. This is a terrible testimony.

b. **You would not go up, but rebelled... and you murmured in your tents... you did not believe the LORD your God:** God had done nothing but show Himself faithful to Israel. They could not point to one instance where He had let them down, though the journey had not been easy. Yet they answered God's faithfulness with rebellion, murmuring, and unbelief.

i. They were not persuaded of the love of God, and they found it hard to trust a God they did not believe loved them. Christians today also need to be persuaded of the love of God. Many believers are hindered in their walk with God because they are not

genuinely persuaded of the love of God for them. They should ask, "What would it take to finally convince me that God really loves me?" We don't wait for God to give us everything we want before we love Him. That is the selfish demand of a short-sighted child, like the child who thinks mommy doesn't love him because he can't have all the candy he wants.

ii. God has already given the ultimate demonstration of His love: *But God demonstrates His own love toward us, in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us. (Rom 5:8)* The death of Jesus for guilty sinners is the ultimate demonstration of God's love; He can do nothing greater than what He has already done in Jesus. Now we can simply receive His love.

c. **The LORD your God, who goes before you, He will fight for you, according to all He did for you in Egypt before your eyes:** With these words, Moses did his best to encourage the people. He called on them to specifically remember God's past faithfulness and consider that He was able to give them victory in the land of Canaan.

i. Satan loves to make us *forget* what we should *remember* (the past victories and miracles of God on our behalf). He also loves to make us *remember* what we should *forget* (our past of sin and the self-life).

d. **Yet, for all that, you did not believe the LORD your God:** In essence, it was not *sin* that kept Israel out of the Promised Land. Instead, it was *unbelief* (though certainly, unbelief is sin). Israel's sin could be covered through atoning sacrifice; but their unbelief and doubt of God's love for them made them unable to trust God.

i. We often think that it is really some sin that hinders us from going on with the LORD. It is true that the LORD wants to deal with the sin and get it out of the

way, but the way that happens is by deepening the relationship of love and trust in the LORD. Unbelief and lack of trust is the real enemy.

C. Moses remembers the aftermath of Israel's rebellion at Kadesh Barnea.

1. (34-40) *Moses' remembers God's oath of judgment against unbelieving Israel.*

"And the LORD heard the sound of your words, and was angry, and took an oath, saying, 'Surely not one of these men of this evil generation shall see that good land of which I swore to give to your fathers, except Caleb the son of Jephunneh; he shall see it, and to him and his children I am giving the land on which he walked, because he wholly followed the LORD.' The LORD was also angry with me for your sakes, saying, 'Even you shall not go in there; Joshua the son of Nun, who stands before you, he shall go in there. Encourage him, for he shall cause Israel to inherit it. Moreover your little ones and your children, who you say will be victims, who today have no knowledge of good and evil, they shall go in there; to them I will give it, and they shall possess it. But as for you, turn and take your journey into the wilderness by the Way of the Red Sea.'"

a. **Was angry, and took an oath:** In response to Israel's unbelief and lack of trust in God's love, God swore an oath ([Psa 95:11](#)) that the adult generation which came out of Egypt would not inherit the Promised Land, but would die in the desolate wilderness instead.

b. **Except Caleb the son of Jephunneh:** The only exceptions were Caleb and Joshua. These were the faithful two among the twelve spies which came back with the report from the Promised Land (

Num 14:6-10).

c. **Even you shall not go in there:** Even Moses himself would not enter the Promised Land. Though this was not specifically said in Numbers 14 (it came later in Numbers 20), it could be inferred then, because Moses was not among the exceptions named (only Joshua and Caleb).

d. **Joshua... he shall cause Israel to inherit it:** As great as Moses was (and truly, he was one of the giants of the Bible), he could not and would not lead Israel into the Promised Land. That was left up to one who came after Moses, Joshua.

i. Moses was the great lawgiver, and represented relationship with God through the Law. This could give a person a wilderness kind of relationship with God, but could never bring them into the Promised Land kind of relationship with God. Only Joshua could do that - and the Hebrew name Joshua exactly corresponds to the name Jesus. Only Jesus can bring us into a Promised Land relationship with God.

e. **Moreover your little ones and your children, whom you say will be victims... they shall possess it:** The great excuse of Israel for their unbelief at Kadesh Barnea was, "If we go and take the land, our children will be killed" (Num 14:3). God answered their unbelieving excuse by saying, "You will be killed, and your children will possess the land."

i. "Anything, in fact, will serve as an excuse, when the heart is bent on compromise." (Spurgeon)

ii. It is sobering to consider how easily, how quickly, and how completely, God sees through our excuses. We often feel confident in our excuses because other people can't really challenge them - but God sees right through them.

2. (41-46) Moses remembers their half-hearted repentance and futile invasion attempt.

"Then you answered and said to me, 'We have sinned against the LORD; we will go up and fight, just as the LORD our God commanded us.' And when everyone of you had girded on his weapons of war, you were ready to go up into the mountain. And the LORD said to me, 'Tell them, "Do not go up nor fight, for I am not among you; lest you be defeated before your enemies." So I spoke to you; yet you would not listen, but rebelled against the command of the LORD, and presumptuously went up into the mountain. And the Amorites who dwelt in that mountain came out against you and chased you as bees do, and drove you back from Seir to Hormah. Then you returned and wept before the LORD, but the LORD would not listen to your voice nor give ear to you. So you remained in Kadesh many days, according to the days that you spent there."

a. **We have sinned against the LORD; we will go up and fight:** After hearing the consequences of their rejection of God, Israel had a change of heart. Yet they went forth in the flesh and not in faith, because God did not lead them.

b. **Rebelled against the command of the LORD:** They did this *in the midst of their supposed repentance*. Their sorrow was not over grieving the heart of God but over forty more years in the wilderness. God therefore saw through their shallow repentance.

c. **The Amorites who dwelt in that mountain came out against you and chased you as bees do:** This shows how their futile invasion attempt ended in disaster. After their total defeat, *then* they wept and wept - but again, this was over the consequences of getting caught,

not over grieving the heart of God, and not over their sin of not believing the great love of God.

The Wilderness Years

Deu 2:1 we finally turned and went into the desert, on the road to the Gulf of Aqaba, as the LORD had commanded, and we spent a long time wandering about in the hill country of Edom.

Deu 2:2 "Then the LORD told me

Deu 2:3 that we had spent enough time wandering about in those hills and that we should go north.

Deu 2:4 He told me to give you the following instructions 'You are about to go through the hill country of Edom, the territory of your distant relatives, the descendants of Esau. They will be afraid of you,

Deu 2:5 but you must not start a war with them, because I am not going to give you so much as a square foot of their land. I have given Edom to Esau's descendants.

Deu 2:6 You may buy food and water from them.'

Deu 2:7 "Remember how the LORD your God has blessed you in everything that you have done. He has taken care of you as you wandered through this vast desert. He has been with you these forty years, and you have had everything you needed.

Deu 2:8 "So we moved on and left the road that goes from the towns of Elath and Eziongeber to the Dead Sea, and we turned northeast toward Moab.

Deu 2:9 The LORD said to me, 'Don't trouble the people of Moab, the descendants of Lot, or start a war against them. I have given them the city of Ar, and I am not going to give you any of their land.' "

Deu 2:10 (A mighty race of giants called the Emim used to live in Ar. They were as tall as the Anakim, another race of giants.

Deu 2:11 Like the Anakim they were also known as Rephaim; but the Moabites called them Emim.

Deu 2:12 The Horites used to live in Edom, but the descendants of Esau chased them out, destroyed their nation, and settled there themselves, just as the Israelites later chased their enemies out of the land that the LORD gave them.)

Deu 2:13 "Then we crossed the Zered River as the LORD told us to do.

Deu 2:14 This was thirty-eight years after we had left Kadesh Barnea. All the fighting men of that generation had died, as the LORD had said they would.

Deu 2:15 The LORD kept on opposing them until he had destroyed them all.

Deu 2:16 "After they had all died,

Deu 2:17 the LORD said to us,

Deu 2:18 'Today you are to pass through the territory of Moab by way of Ar.

Deu 2:19 You will then be near the land of the Ammonites, the descendants of Lot. Don't trouble them or start a war against them, because I am not going to give you any of the land that I have given them.' "

Deu 2:20 (This territory is also known as the land of the Rephaim, the name of the people who used to live there; the Ammonites called them Zamzummim.

Deu 2:21 They were as tall as the Anakim. There were many of them, and they were a mighty race. But the LORD destroyed them, so that the Ammonites took over their land and settled there.

Deu 2:22 The LORD had done the same thing for the Edomites, the descendants of Esau, who live in the hill country of Edom. He destroyed the Horites, so that the Edomites took over their land and settled there, where they still live.

Deu 2:23 The land along the Mediterranean coast had been settled by people from the island of Crete. They had destroyed the Avvim, the original inhabitants, and had taken over all their land as far south as the city of Gaza.)

Deu 2:24 "After we had passed through Moab, the LORD told us, 'Now, start out and cross the Arnon River. I am placing in your power Sihon, the Amorite king of Heshbon, along with his land. Attack him, and begin occupying his land.

Deu 2:25 From today on I will make people everywhere afraid of you. Everyone will tremble with fear at the mention of your name.'

The Defeat of King Sihon

Deu 2:26 "Then I sent messengers from the desert of Kedemoth to King Sihon of Heshbon with the following offer of peace:

Deu 2:27 'Let us pass through your country. We will go straight through and not leave the road.

Deu 2:28 We will pay for the food we eat and the water we drink. All we want to do is to pass through your country,

Deu 2:29 until we cross the Jordan River into the land that the LORD our God is giving us. The descendants of Esau, who live in Edom, and the Moabites, who live in Ar, allowed us to pass through their territory.'

Deu 2:30 "But King Sihon would not let us pass through his country. The LORD your God had made him stubborn and rebellious, so that we could defeat him and take his territory, which we still occupy.

Deu 2:31 "Then the LORD said to me, 'Look, I have made King Sihon and his land helpless before you; take his land and occupy it.'

Deu 2:32 Sihon came out with all his men to fight us near the town of Jahaz,

Deu 2:33 but the LORD our God put him in our power, and we killed him, his sons, and all his men.

Deu 2:34 At the same time we captured and destroyed every town, and put everyone to death, men, women, and children. We left no survivors.

Deu 2:35 We took the livestock and plundered the towns.

Deu 2:36 The LORD our God let us capture all the towns from Aroer, on the edge of the Arnon Valley, and the city in the middle of that valley, all the way to Gilead. No town had walls too strong for us.

Deu 2:37 But we did not go near the territory of the Ammonites or to the banks of the Jabbok River or to the towns of the hill country or to any other place where the LORD our God had commanded us not to go.

Deuteronomy 2:1-37

Deuteronomy 2 - Moses Remembers the Desert Years and the March On to Canaan

A. Moses remembers the desert years.

1. (1-7) Moses remembers the journey through the land of Edom.

"Then we turned and journeyed into the wilderness of the Way of the Red Sea, as the LORD spoke to me, and we skirted Mount Seir for many days. And the LORD spoke to me, saying: 'You have skirted this mountain long enough; turn northward. And command the people, saying, "You are about to pass through the territory of your brethren, the descendants of Esau, who live in Seir; and they will be afraid of you. Therefore watch yourselves carefully. Do not meddle with them, for I will not give you any of their land, no, not so much as one footstep, because I have given Mount Seir to Esau as

a possession. You shall buy food from them with money, that you may eat; and you shall also buy water from them with money, that you may drink. For the LORD your God has blessed you in all the work of your hand. He knows your trudging through this great wilderness. These forty years the LORD your God has been with you; you have lacked nothing.””

a. You are about to pass through the territory of your brethren, the descendants of Esau: The **descendants of Esau** were distant relatives to the people of Israel (400 years earlier, the brother of Jacob was Esau). God didn't want Israel to take the land that He gave to Esau and his descendants, the Edomites (**Edom** was a nickname for Esau).

i. Perhaps the most famous Edomite in the New Testament was Herod the Great. He was hated by the Jews because he was an Edomite, but he wanted to be received and respected as a Jew.

b. Do not meddle with them, for I will not give you any of their land: Israel was not just some conquering army, out to get whatever land it could take. It probably was strong enough to simply take the land of Edom, but Israel only received what God had promised to them.

c. You shall buy food from them with money... you shall also buy water: God commanded Israel to treat the Edomites with respect, even though they could have dominated them as a stronger nation.

i. How we treat those weaker than ourselves is always a good measure of character. When we have the capability to dominate or abuse others and do not, it shows that we have good character. For some of these reasons, God commanded Israel to treat the weaker nation of Edom well.

2. (8-15) Moses remembers the journey through Moab.

"And when we passed beyond our brethren, the descendants of Esau who dwell in Seir, away from the road of the plain, away from Elath and Ezion Geber, we turned and passed by way of the Wilderness of Moab. Then the LORD said to me, 'Do not harass Moab, nor contend with them in battle, for I will not give you any of their land as a possession, because I have given Ar to the descendants of Lot as a possession.'" (The Emim had dwelt there in times past, a people as great and numerous and tall as the Anakim. They were also regarded as giants, like the Anakim, but the Moabites call them Emim. The Horites formerly dwelt in Seir, but the descendants of Esau dispossessed them and destroyed them from before them, and dwelt in their place, just as Israel did to the land of their possession which the LORD gave them.) 'Now rise and cross over the Valley of the Zered.' So we crossed over the Valley of the Zered. And the time we took to come from Kadesh Barnea until we crossed over the Valley of the Zered was thirty-eight years, until all the generation of the men of war was consumed from the midst of the camp, just as the LORD had sworn to them. For indeed the hand of the LORD was against them, to destroy them from the midst of the camp until they were consumed."

a. **Passed by way of the Wilderness of Moab:** The Moabites were also distant relatives to Israel; they descended from Lot, who was the nephew of Abraham. And as with Edom, God did not want Israel to **harass Moab, nor contend with them in battle** - their land was not the land God intended to give Israel.

- i. One of the more famous Moabites in the Bible was Ruth. She was a Moabite woman who married an Israelite man named Boaz and became grandmother to King David and one of the ancestors of the Messiah.
- b. **The Emim had dwelt there in times past:** The Moabites were of note because they defeated a Canaanite people known as the **Emim**, who were a large, fearsome race as were the **Anakim**.
 - i. The term translated **giants** here is actually the Hebrew word *rephaim*. The term *rephaim* is often translated “giants,” but it actually means “fearsome ones.”
 - ii. The **Rephaim** were a group of large, warlike people who populated Canaan before the Israelites. In the area east of the Jordan River, they were known by many names: The Moabites called them **Emim**, the Ammonites called them *Zamzummin* (Deu 2:20).
- c. **Thirty-eight years:** In these brief verses, Moses covered thirty-eight years of Israel’s wandering in the wilderness. This was a period when they just took up time, waiting for the generation of unbelief to die so that the generation of faith could take the Promised Land.

B. Moses remembers the nations they encountered on their way to Canaan.

1. (16-23) Going through the land of the Ammonites.

“So it was, when all the men of war had finally perished from among the people, that the LORD spoke to me, saying: ‘This day you are to cross over at Ar, the boundary of Moab. And when you come near the people of Ammon, do not harass them or meddle with them, for I will not give you any of the land of the people of Ammon as a possession, because I have

given it to the descendants of Lot as a possession.” (That was also regarded as a land of giants; giants formerly dwelt there. But the Ammonites call them Zamzummim, a people as great and numerous and tall as the Anakim. But the LORD destroyed them before them, and they dispossessed them and dwelt in their place, just as He had done for the descendants of Esau, who dwelt in Seir, when He destroyed the Horites from before them. They dispossessed them and dwelt in their place, even to this day. And the Avim, who dwelt in villages as far as Gaza; the Captorim, who came from Captor, destroyed them and dwelt in their place.)

a. **I will not give you any of the land of the people of Ammon:** As with the Edomites and the Moabites, the land of the Ammonites was also not for the people of Israel.

2. (24-37) *Moses remembers the conquest of Sihon, king of the Amorites.*

“Rise, take your journey, and cross over the River Arnon. Look, I have given into your hand Sihon the Amorite, king of Heshbon, and his land. Begin to possess it, and engage him in battle. This day I will begin to put the dread and fear of you upon the nations under the whole heaven, who shall hear the report of you, and shall tremble and be in anguish because of you.’ And I sent messengers from the Wilderness of Kedemoth to Sihon king of Heshbon, with words of peace, saying, Let me pass through your land; I will keep strictly to the road, and I will turn neither to the right nor to the left. You shall sell me food for money, that I may eat, and give me water for money, that I may drink; only let me pass through on foot, just as the descendants of Esau who dwell in

Seir and the Moabites who dwell in Ar did for me, until I cross the Jordan to the land which the LORD our God is giving us.' But Sihon king of Heshbon would not let us pass through, for the LORD your God hardened his spirit and made his heart obstinate, that He might deliver him into your hand, as *it is* this day. And the LORD said to me, 'See, I have begun to give Sihon and his land over to you. Begin to possess *it*, that you may inherit his land.' Then Sihon and all his people came out against us to fight at Jahaz. And the LORD our God delivered him over to us; so we defeated him, his sons, and all his people. We took all his cities at that time, and we utterly destroyed the men, women, and little ones of every city; we left none remaining. We took only the livestock as plunder for ourselves, with the spoil of the cities which we took. From Aroer, which *is* on the bank of the River Arnon, and from the city that *is* in the ravine, as far as Gilead, there was not one city too strong for us; the LORD our God delivered all to us. Only you did not go near the land of the people of Ammon; anywhere along the River Jabbok, or to the cities of the mountains, or wherever the LORD our God had forbidden us."

- a. **Sihon king of Heshbon would not let us pass through:** Because of this refusal, Israel fought a battle recorded in Numbers 21. They simply asked for safe passage through the land of the Amorites, but they were refused.
- b. **The LORD your God hardened his spirit and made his heart obstinate, that He might deliver him into your hand:** God worked behind the scenes in hardening the heart of Sihon, the King of the Amorites.

i. It was right for God to do this because the Creator has the right to do whatever He pleases with His creatures. But it was also right because of the way God did it. God did not persuade a reluctant Sihon to act out against Israel; God simply let Sihon's heart take the evil way it wanted to take. God did not change Sihon's heart from good to bad but hardened it in its malice towards Israel.

c. **That He might deliver him into your hand:** This explains why God hardened the heart of Sihon. God led Sihon into the destructive course that his heart desired so that the land of the Amorites became the possession and inheritance of Israel.

d. **Utterly destroyed the men, women, and little ones of every city; we left none remaining:** The war against the Amorites was one of the unique wars of judgment God told Israel to fight. In it, Israel was not just to defeat the Amorites on the field of battle, but to bring judgment against their whole society.

e. **There was not one city too strong for us:** Thirty-eight years before, Israel refused to go into the Promised Land because they felt they were over-matched militarily. Here, when they began to enter the land by faith, God showed them how it

could have been 38 years before - if they had only believed Him.

i. **There was not one city too strong for us** is actually, "there was not one city too high for us." The high walls of the Canaanite cities had intimidated Israel 38 years before (see Deu 1:28). But walking in faith, they were now nothing before the LORD.

The Defeat of King Og

Deu 3:1 "Next, we moved north toward the region of Bashan, and King Og came out with all his men to fight us near the town of Edrei.

Deu 3:2 But the LORD said to me, 'Don't be afraid of him. I am going to give him, his men, and all his territory to you. Do the same thing to him that you did to Sihon the Amorite king who ruled in Heshbon.'

Deu 3:3 "So the LORD also placed King Og and his people in our power, and we slaughtered them all.

Deu 3:4 At the same time we captured all his towns—there was not one that we did not take. In all we captured sixty towns—the whole region of Argob, where King Og of Bashan ruled.

Deu 3:5 All these towns were fortified with high walls, gates, and bars to lock the gates, and there were also many villages without walls.

Deu 3:6 We destroyed all the towns and put to death all the men, women, and children, just as we did in the towns that belonged to King Sihon of Heshbon.

Deu 3:7 We took the livestock and plundered the towns.

Deu 3:8 "At that time we took from those two Amorite kings the land east of the Jordan River, from the Arnon River to Mount Hermon.

Deu 3:9 (Mount Hermon is called Sirion by the Sidonians, and Senir by the Amorites.)

Deu 3:10 We took all the territory of King Og of Bashan: the cities on the plateau, the regions of Gilead and of Bashan, as far east as the towns of Salekah and Edrei."

Deu 3:11 (King Og was the last of the Rephaim. His coffin, made of stone, was six feet wide and almost fourteen feet long, according to standard measurements. It can still be seen in the Ammonite city of Rabbah.)

Deu 3:12 "When we took possession of the land, I assigned to the tribes of Reuben and Gad the territory north of the

town of Aroer near the Arnon River and part of the hill country of Gilead, along with its towns.

Deu 3:13 To half the tribe of Manasseh I assigned the rest of Gilead and also all of Bashan, where Og had ruled, that is, the entire Argob region." (Bashan was known as the land of the Rephaim.

Deu 3:14 Jair, from the tribe of Manasseh, took the entire region of Argob, that is, Bashan, as far as the border of Geshur and Maacah. He named the villages after himself, and they are still known as the villages of Jair.)

Deu 3:15 "I assigned Gilead to the clan of Machir of the tribe of Manasseh.

Deu 3:16 And to the tribes of Reuben and Gad I assigned the territory from Gilead to the Arnon River. The middle of the river was their southern boundary, and their northern boundary was the Jabbok River, part of which formed the Ammonite border.

Deu 3:17 On the west their territory extended to the Jordan River, from Lake Galilee in the north down to the Dead Sea in the south and to the foot of Mount Pisgah on the east.

Deu 3:18 "At the same time, I gave them the following instructions: 'The LORD our God has given you this land east of the Jordan to occupy. Now arm your fighting men and send them across the Jordan ahead of the other tribes of Israel, to help them occupy their land.

Deu 3:19 Only your wives, children, and livestock—I know you have a lot of livestock—will remain behind in the towns that I have assigned to you.

Deu 3:20 Help the other Israelites until they occupy the land that the LORD is giving them west of the Jordan and until the LORD lets them live there in peace, as he has already done here for you. After that, you may return to this land that I have assigned to you.'

Deu 3:21 "Then I instructed Joshua: 'You have seen all that the LORD your God did to those two kings, Sihon and Og; and he will do the same thing to everyone else whose land you invade.

Deu 3:22 Don't be afraid of them, for the LORD your God will fight for you.'

Moses Forbidden to Enter the Land

Deu 3:23 "At that time I earnestly prayed,

Deu 3:24 'Sovereign LORD, I know that you have shown me only the beginning of the great and wonderful things you are going to do. There is no god in heaven or on earth who can do the mighty things that you have done!

Deu 3:25 Let me cross the Jordan River, LORD, and see the fertile land on the other side, the beautiful hill country and the Lebanon Mountains.'

Deu 3:26 "But because of you people the LORD was angry with me and would not listen. Instead, he said, 'That's enough! Don't mention this again!

Deu 3:27 Go to the peak of Mount Pisgah and look to the north and to the south, to the east and to the west. Look carefully at what you see, because you will never go across the Jordan.

Deu 3:28 Give Joshua his instructions. Strengthen his determination, because he will lead the people across to occupy the land that you see.'

Deu 3:29 "So we remained in the valley opposite the town of Bethpeor."

Deuteronomy 3:1-29

Deuteronomy 3 - Moses Remembers the March On to Canaan, and the Appointment of Joshua

A. Moses remembers the defeat of Bashan.

1. (1-2) God commands Israel to attack Bashan.

"Then we turned and went up the road to Bashan; and Og king of Bashan came out against us, he and all his people, to battle at Edrei. And the LORD said to me, 'Do not fear him, for I have delivered him and all his people and his land into your hand; you shall do to him as you did to Sihon king of the Amorites, who dwelt at Heshbon.'"

a. **Do not fear him, for I have delivered him and all his people and his land into your hand:** As Israel continued closer to the Promised Land, moving westward towards the Jordan River, they passed through the land of Og, king of Bashan.

2. (3-11) *Israel defeats Bashan.*

"So the LORD our God also delivered into our hands Og king of Bashan, with all his people, and we attacked him until he had no survivors remaining. And we took all his cities at that time; there was not a city which we did not take from them: sixty cities, all the region of Argob, the kingdom of Og in Bashan. All these cities were fortified with high walls, gates, and bars, besides a great many rural towns. And we utterly destroyed them, as we did to Sihon king of Heshbon, utterly destroying the men, women, and children of every city. But all the livestock and the spoil of the cities we took as booty for ourselves. And at that time we took the land from the hand of the two kings of the Amorites who were on this side of the Jordan, from the River Arnon to Mount Hermon (the Sidonians call Hermon Sirion, and the Amorites call it Senir), all the cities of the plain, all Gilead, and all Bashan, as far as Salcah and Edrei, cities of the kingdom of Og in Bashan. For only Og king of Bashan remained of the remnant of the giants. Indeed his bedstead was an iron bedstead. (Is it not in Rabbah

of the people of Ammon?) Nine cubits is its length and four cubits its width, according to the standard cubit.”

- a. **And we took all his cities at that time... sixty cities:** This brought Israel even more territory to occupy on the east side of the Jordan River, and it showed them that they could, through the power of God, overcome the mighty enemies they would confront on the west side of the Jordan River.
- b. **Only Og king of Bashan remained of the remnant of the giants:** Apparently, Og was the last of the *rephaim* in his area, on the east side of the Jordan River.
 - i. The repeated references to the *rephaim* in these first three chapters shows that Israel, when trusting in God, was well able to defeat this race of fearsome warriors. It also shows that their fear of these men back in Numbers 13, where they first refused to go into the Promised Land, was unfounded. Their excuses are shown to be weaker in light of the next generation’s victories.
- c. **Indeed his bedstead was an iron bedstead:** Og’s **bedstead** was 14 feet by 6 feet in modern measurement (4 meters by 2 meters). Some commentators believe this actually describes his burial sarcophagus.

B. Moses remembers the tribes that settled on the east side of the Jordan River.

- 1. (12-17) *The division of the land conquered on the east side of the Jordan River among the tribes of Reuben, Gad, and half the tribe of Manasseh.*

“And this land, which we possessed at that time, from Aroer, which is by the River Arnon, and half the mountains of Gilead and its cities, I gave to the Reubenites and the Gadites. The rest of Gilead, and all

Bashan, the kingdom of Og, I gave to half the tribe of Manasseh. (All the region of Argob, with all Bashan, was called the land of the giants. Jair the son of Manasseh took all the region of Argob, as far as the border of the Geshurites and the Maachathites, and called Bashan after his own name, Havoth Jair, to this day.) Also I gave Gilead to Machir. And to the Reubenites and the Gadites I gave from Gilead as far as the River Arnon, the middle of the river as *the border*, as far as the River Jabbok, the border of the people of Ammon; the plain also, with the Jordan as *the border*, from Chinnereth as far as the east side of the Sea of the Arabah (the Salt Sea), below the slopes of Pisgah."

a. And this land, which we possessed at that time:

These two-and-one-half tribes decided that this land on the east side of the Jordan River was good enough for them, and the LORD allowed it - if they would fulfill the obligations mentioned in the following verses.

2. (18-20) *The command for the trans-jordan tribes to assist the rest of Israel in the conquest of Canaan.*

"Then I commanded you at that time, saying: 'The LORD your God has given you this land to possess. All you men of valor shall cross over armed before your brethren, the children of Israel. But your wives, your little ones, and your livestock (I know that you have much livestock) shall stay in your cities which I have given you, until the LORD has given rest to your brethren as to you, and they also possess the land which the LORD your God is giving them beyond the Jordan. Then each of you may return to his possession which I have given you.'"

C. Moses remembers the appointment of Joshua.

1. (21-22) *Moses encourages Joshua.*

"And I commanded Joshua at that time, saying, 'Your eyes have seen all that the LORD your God has done to these two kings; so will the LORD do to all the kingdoms through which you pass. You must not fear them, for the LORD your God Himself fights for you.'"

a. **And I commanded Joshua at that time:** Joshua had a huge job to do - to bring a whole nation into a land where they would not be welcome, and where they would have to fight to possess what God had rightfully given to them.

b. **You must not fear them, for the LORD your God Himself fights for you:** With this huge challenge in front of him, Joshua is encouraged to remember **all that the LORD your God has done to these two kings** (Sihon and Og). Remembering God's past faithfulness is key to present and future victory.

2. (23-29) *Moses remembers his plea to enter the Promised Land.*

"Then I pleaded with the LORD at that time, saying: 'O Lord GOD, You have begun to show Your servant Your greatness and Your mighty hand, for what god is there in heaven or on earth who can do anything like Your works and Your mighty deeds? I pray, let me cross over and see the good land beyond the Jordan, those pleasant mountains, and Lebanon.' But the LORD was angry with me on your account, and would not listen to me. So the LORD said to me: 'Enough of that! Speak no more to Me of this matter. Go up to the top of Pisgah, and lift your eyes toward the west, the north, the south, and the east; behold it with your eyes, for you shall not cross over this Jordan. But command Joshua, and encourage him and strengthen him; for he shall go over before this people, and he

shall cause them to inherit the land which you will see.' So we stayed in the valley opposite Beth Peor."

a. **Then I pleaded with the LORD... Let me cross over and see:** Moses knew God was rich in mercy and forgiveness. He knew there was no harm in asking God to relent from His previous judgment that Moses would not see the Promised Land.

i. We can appreciate what a painful thing this was for Moses. He lived the first 40 years of his life confident in his own ability to deliver Israel. He spent the next 40 years of his life having that confidence demolished as he tended his father-in-law's sheep. He spent the last 40 years of his life being used of God to do what he was called to do. Now, he was not allowed to see the end result. No wonder Moses **pleaded with the LORD.**

b. **Enough of that! Speak no more to Me of this matter:** God did not want to hear Moses' appeal on this matter. Because of his sin at Meribah (Numbers 20), where he misrepresented God as being angry with Israel when He was not, Moses could not enter the Promised Land.

i. This may seem an excessively harsh punishment for Moses. It seemed that after only one slip-up, he then had to die short of the Promised Land. But Moses was being judged by a stricter standard because of his leadership position with the nation, and because he had a uniquely close relationship with God.

ii. It is right for teachers and leaders to be judged by a stricter standard (Jas 3:1); though it is unrighteous to hold teachers and leaders to a perfect standard. It is true the people's conduct was worse than Moses', but it is irrelevant.

iii. Worst of all, Moses defaced a beautiful picture of Jesus' redemptive work through the rock which provided water in the wilderness. The New Testament makes it clear this water-providing, life-giving rock was a picture of Jesus (1Co 10:4). Jesus, being struck once, provided life for all who would drink of Him (Joh 7:37). But it was unnecessary - and unrighteous - that Jesus would be struck again, much less again twice, because the Son of God needed only to suffer once (Heb 10:10-12). Jesus can now be come to with words of faith (Rom 10:8-10), as Moses should have only used words of faith to bring life-giving water to the nation of Israel. Moses "ruined" this picture of the work of Jesus God intended.

c. **Speak no more to Me of this matter:** Moses was a great man of intercession - perhaps one of the greatest in the Bible. Yet, God would say "no" even to Moses in prayer. God will sometimes say no even to His mightiest intercessors (Jer 15:1).

d. **Go up to Pisgah:** This was the place where Moses would be able to see the Promised from a distance, and then die - and where the book of Deuteronomy will end.

e. **But command Joshua, and encourage him and strengthen him:** It was probably easy for Moses to have a bad attitude here - "well, if I'm not going into the Promised Land, I'm sure not going to knock myself out training my replacement." But that was not the heart of Moses - he would do everything he could to love the people, prepare them to go in, and to make Joshua a success. A man of God would not do it any other way.

i. Moses had the heart of a true shepherd. He knew that his ministry was not centered on himself and his own satisfaction, but on God and His people.

ii. "In fact, Moses' death is not recorded until chapter 34, so that the whole book of Deuteronomy is framed between the announcement of Moses' impending death and the announcement of his actual death. The book is thus, in a sense, the spiritual testament of Moses, Israel's great Lawgiver." (Thompson)

Moses Commands Obedience

Deu 4:1 Then Moses said to the people, "Obey all the laws that I am teaching you, and you will live and occupy the land which the LORD, the God of your ancestors, is giving you.

Deu 4:2 Do not add anything to what I command you, and do not take anything away. Obey the commands of the LORD your God that I have given you.

Deu 4:3 You yourselves saw what the LORD did at Mount Peor. He destroyed everyone who worshiped Baal there,

Deu 4:4 but those of you who were faithful to the LORD your God are still alive today.

Deu 4:5 "I have taught you all the laws, as the LORD my God told me to do. Obey them in the land that you are about to invade and occupy.

Deu 4:6 Obey them faithfully, and this will show the people of other nations how wise you are. When they hear of all these laws, they will say, 'What wisdom and understanding this great nation has!'

Deu 4:7 "No other nation, no matter how great, has a god who is so near when they need him as the LORD our God is to us. He answers us whenever we call for help.

Deu 4:8 No other nation, no matter how great, has laws so just as those that I have taught you today.

Deu 4:9 Be on your guard! Make certain that you do not forget, as long as you live, what you have seen with your own eyes. Tell your children and your grandchildren

Deu 4:10 about the day you stood in the presence of the LORD your God at Mount Sinai, when he said to me, 'Assemble the people. I want them to hear what I have to say, so that they will learn to obey me as long as they live and so that they will teach their children to do the same.'

Deu 4:11 "Tell your children how you went and stood at the foot of the mountain which was covered with thick clouds of dark smoke and fire blazing up to the sky.

Deu 4:12 Tell them how the LORD spoke to you from the fire, how you heard him speaking but did not see him in any form at all.

Deu 4:13 He told you what you must do to keep the covenant he made with you—you must obey the Ten Commandments, which he wrote on two stone tablets.

Deu 4:14 The LORD told me to teach you all the laws that you are to obey in the land that you are about to invade and occupy.

Idolatry Forbidden

Deu 4:15 "When the LORD spoke to you from the fire on Mount Sinai, you did not see any form. For your own good, then, make certain

Deu 4:16 that you do not sin by making for yourselves an idol in any form at all—whether man or woman,

Deu 4:17 animal or bird,

Deu 4:18 reptile or fish.

Deu 4:19 Do not be tempted to worship and serve what you see in the sky—the sun, the moon, and the stars. The LORD your God has given these to all other peoples for them to worship.

Deu 4:20 But you are the people he rescued from Egypt, that blazing furnace. He brought you out to make you his own people, as you are today.

Deu 4:21 Because of you the LORD your God was angry with me and solemnly declared that I would not cross the Jordan River to enter the fertile land which he is giving you.

Deu 4:22 I will die in this land and never cross the river, but you are about to go across and occupy that fertile land.

Deu 4:23 Be certain that you do not forget the covenant that the LORD your God made with you. Obey his command not to make yourselves any kind of idol,

Deu 4:24 because the LORD your God is like a flaming fire; he tolerates no rivals.

Deu 4:25 "Even when you have been in the land a long time and have children and grandchildren, do not sin by making for yourselves an idol in any form at all. This is evil in the LORD's sight, and it will make him angry.

Deu 4:26 I call heaven and earth as witnesses against you today that, if you disobey me, you will soon disappear from the land. You will not live very long in the land across the Jordan that you are about to occupy. You will be completely destroyed.

Deu 4:27 The LORD will scatter you among other nations, where only a few of you will survive.

Deu 4:28 There you will serve gods made by human hands, gods of wood and stone, gods that cannot see or hear, eat or smell.

Deu 4:29 There you will look for the LORD your God, and if you search for him with all your heart, you will find him.

Deu 4:30 When you are in trouble and all those things happen to you, then you will finally turn to the LORD and obey him.

Deu 4:31 He is a merciful God. He will not abandon you or destroy you, and he will not forget the covenant that he himself made with your ancestors.

The Lord Alone Is God

Deu 4:32 "Search the past, the time before you were born, all the way back to the time when God created human beings on the earth. Search the entire earth. Has anything as great as this ever happened before? Has anyone ever heard of anything like this?

Deu 4:33 Have any people ever lived after hearing a god speak to them from a fire, as you have?

Deu 4:34 Has any god ever dared to go and take a people from another nation and make them his own, as the LORD your God did for you in Egypt? Before your very eyes he used his great power and strength; he brought plagues and war, worked miracles and wonders, and caused terrifying things to happen.

Deu 4:35 The LORD has shown you this, to prove to you that he alone is God and that there is no other.

Deu 4:36 He let you hear his voice from heaven so that he could instruct you; and here on earth he let you see his holy fire, and he spoke to you from it.

Deu 4:37 Because he loved your ancestors, he chose you, and by his great power he himself brought you out of Egypt.

Deu 4:38 As you advanced, he drove out nations greater and more powerful than you, so that he might bring you in and give you their land, the land which still belongs to you.

Deu 4:39 So remember today and never forget: the LORD is God in heaven and on earth. There is no other god.

Deu 4:40 Obey all his laws that I have given you today, and all will go well with you and your descendants. You will continue to live in the land that the LORD your God is giving you to be yours forever."

Cities of Refuge

Deu 4:41 Then Moses set aside three cities east of the Jordan River

Deu 4:42 to which a man could escape and be safe if he had accidentally killed someone who had not been his enemy. He could escape to one of these cities and not be put to death.

Deu 4:43 For the tribe of Reuben there was the city of Bezer, on the desert plateau; for the tribe of Gad there was Ramoth, in the territory of Gilead; and for the tribe of Manasseh there was Golan, in the territory of Bashan.

Introduction to the Law

Deu 4:44 Moses gave God's laws and teachings to the people of Israel.

Deu 4:45 (45-46) It was after they had come out of Egypt and were in the valley east of the Jordan River, opposite the town of Bethpeor, that he gave them these laws. This was in the territory that had belonged to King Sihon of the Amorites, who had ruled in the town of Heshbon. Moses and the people of Israel defeated him when they came out of Egypt.

Deu 4:47 They occupied his land and the land of King Og of Bashan, the other Amorite king who lived east of the Jordan.

Deu 4:48 This land extended from the town of Aroer, on the edge of the Arnon River, all the way north to Mount Sirion, that is, Mount Hermon.

Deu 4:49 It also included all the region east of the Jordan River as far south as the Dead Sea and east to the foot of Mount Pisgah.

Deuteronomy 4:1-49

Deuteronomy 4 - A Call to Obedience

A. Moses challenges the nation to obedience.

1. (1-8) *Moses challenges Israel to learn from the example of Baal-Peor.*

"Now, O Israel, listen to the statutes and the judgments which I teach you to observe, that you may live, and go in and possess the land which the LORD God of your fathers is giving you. You shall not add to the word which I command you, nor take from it, that you may keep the commandments of the LORD your God which I command you. Your eyes have seen what the LORD did at Baal Peor; for the LORD your God has destroyed from among you all the men who followed Baal of Peor. But you who held fast to the LORD your God are alive today, every one of you. Surely I have taught you statutes and judgments, just as the LORD my God commanded me, that you should act according to *them* in the land which you go to possess. Therefore be careful to observe *them*; for this *is* your wisdom and your understanding in the sight of the peoples who will hear all these statutes, and say, 'Surely this great nation *is* a wise and understanding people.' For what great nation *is there* that has God so near to it, as the LORD our God *is* to us, for whatever *reason* we may call upon Him? And what great nation *is there* that has *such* statutes and righteous judgments as are in all this law which I set before you this day?"

a. **Now, O Israel, listen:** Moses had reminded Israel of their many rebellions against God in the wilderness. Now, as they were ready to enter into the Promised Land, he wanted them to think about their need for present obedience in light of their past rebellions.

i. As noticed before, one of Satan's great strategies is to make us remember what we should forget and forget what we should remember. If we don't remember our past sins and rebellions against God, we can easily repeat them, falling into the same sinful

patterns and traps: *Therefore let him who thinks he stands take heed lest he fall.* (1Co 10:12)

b. **That you may live:** In the larger sense, spiritual life and death depended on Israel's obedience. Yet also in the more immediate sense, physical life and death depended on their obedience. Israel was about to attack a strong nation and to push them out of the Promised Land - if they didn't have the blessing of the LORD upon them, they would soon be in a lot of trouble.

i. In fact, Israel's first military loss in the Promised Land (at Ai, Joshua 7) came specifically because they had disobeyed God. 36 men died at Ai, because one man in Israel (Achan) did not obey the command of the LORD.

c. **You shall not add to the word which I command you, nor take anything from it:** This is an important principle regarding God's Word. We are not to add to it (in the sense of making the traditions and opinions of men equal to the law of God), nor are we to take away from it (by bad teaching or explaining away passages).

i. This same idea is repeated in Rev 22:18-19 : *For I testify to everyone who hears the words of the prophecy of this book: If anyone adds to these things, God will add to him the plagues that are written in this book; and if anyone takes away from the words of the book of this prophecy, God shall take away his part from the Book of Life, from the holy city, and from the things which are written in this book.*

d. **Your eyes have seen what the LORD did at Baal Peor:** At **Baal Peor**, Israel sinned by committing both sexual and spiritual immorality with the women of Moab. Moses warned the people of Israel that if they rejected God now as they did back then, the result would be the same. Many would die in the judgment of the LORD.

e. **Surely this great nation is a wise and understanding nation:** God's intention was that through Israel's obedience to the covenant, He would exalt them among the nations and make them a witness. This was so that foreigners, like the Queen of Sheba who visited Solomon at the height of his blessing, would see that the LORD God of Israel was indeed the LORD God (1 Kings 10).

2. (9-20) Moses challenges Israel to learn from the example at Mount Sinai (Horeb).

"Only take heed to yourself, and diligently keep yourself, lest you forget the things your eyes have seen, and lest they depart from your heart all the days of your life. And teach them to your children and your grandchildren, "especially concerning the day you stood before the LORD your God in Horeb, when the LORD said to me, 'Gather the people to Me, and I will let them hear My words, that they may learn to fear Me all the days they live on the earth, and that they may teach their children.' Then you came near and stood at the foot of the mountain, and the mountain burned with fire to the midst of heaven, with darkness, cloud, and thick darkness. And the LORD spoke to you out of the midst of the fire. You heard the sound of the words, but saw no form; you only *heard* a voice. So He declared to you His covenant which He commanded you to perform, the Ten Commandments; and He wrote them on two tablets of stone. And the LORD commanded me at that time to teach you statutes and judgments, that you might observe them in the land which you cross over to possess. Take careful heed to yourselves, for you saw no form when the LORD spoke to you at Horeb out of the midst of the fire, lest you act corruptly and make for yourselves a carved image in

the form of any figure: the likeness of male or female, the likeness of any animal that *is* on the earth or the likeness of any winged bird that flies in the air, the likeness of anything that creeps on the ground or the likeness of any fish that *is* in the water beneath the earth. And *take heed*, lest you lift your eyes to heaven, and *when* you see the sun, the moon, and the stars, all the host of heaven, you feel driven to worship them and serve them, which the LORD your God has given to all the peoples under the whole heaven as a heritage. But the LORD has taken you and brought you out of the iron furnace, out of Egypt, to be His people, an inheritance, as you are this day.”

- a. **Only take heed to yourself:** After this warning, Moses then warned them to take the commands of God and **teach them to your children and your grandchildren.** Israel was not play the hypocritical game of “do what I say and not what I do” with their children. Instead they were to **take heed** to themselves first, then instruct their children.
- b. **Especially concerning the day:** Moses told the nation to especially tell their children about the experience in **Horeb** (that is, Mount Sinai) - an experience most of these only knew as children, if at all.
 - i. At Horeb, the nation of Israel heard God speak (**I will let them hear My words**). The intention of such a personal encounter was so that they would obey God - but they did not.
- c. **He declared to you His covenant:** At Mount Sinai, Israel did not only receive commandments from God; they also entered into a covenant with Him, promising to obey Him, and God promising to bless an obedient Israel (Exo 24:1-8).

d. **You heard the sound of the words, but saw no form; you only heard a voice:** The commands at Horeb had to be obeyed. Because they saw no form of God, therefore God commanded that they must never make an image to represent Him.

i. Israel also was forbidden to worship the creation of God. Neither any **beast** or **bird** or **the sun, the moon, and the stars** are fit for our worship. This is worshipping the creature rather than the Creator (Rom 1:25).

e. **The LORD has taken you and brought you out of the iron furnace:** Because God has delivered us, He has rights over us. He did not deliver us so we could do our own thing, but so we could do *His* thing.

3. (21-24) *Moses challenges Israel to learn from the example of his own failure.*

"Furthermore the LORD was angry with me for your sakes, and swore that I would not cross over the Jordan, and that I would not enter the good land which the LORD your God is giving you as an inheritance. But I must die in this land, I must not cross over the Jordan; but you shall cross over and possess that good land. Take heed to yourselves, lest you forget the covenant of the LORD your God which He made with you, and make for yourselves a carved image in the form of anything which the LORD your God has forbidden you. For the LORD your God is a consuming fire, a jealous God."

a. **The LORD was angry with me for your sakes:** It was for the sake of Israel that God disciplined Moses, not allowing him to enter the Promised Land. Israel needed to see that no man, not even Moses was above the Law. They also had to understand that it was indeed better

that Joshua lead them into the Promised Land instead of Moses.

b. **I must die in this land... but you shall cross over and possess that good land:** Moses was humble enough to recognize his own sin and failure before Israel, and he had enough faith to believe that they could make it - even without him.

i. Moses knew that he was replaceable. It is a dangerous thing when anybody in the ministry begins to think they are doing something no one else can do, or that they are irreplaceable. God can and does use anyone; if a ministry does depend on one irreplaceable person, then it is of man and not of God. Moses was humble enough, and wise enough, to know this.

c. **For the LORD your God is a consuming fire:** Moses' idea was simply, "If God did not spare me when I sinned against Him, don't think He will spare you if you turn to other gods. God is a consuming fire, and we must take Him and obedience to Him seriously." The same idea is echoed in Heb 12:29.

B. Moses warns the nation about the danger of disobedience.

1. (25-28) *The price of serving other gods: exile among the nations.*

"When you beget children and grandchildren and have grown old in the land, and act corruptly and make a carved image in the form of anything, and do evil in the sight of the LORD your God to provoke Him to anger, I call heaven and earth to witness against you this day, that you will soon utterly perish from the land which you cross over the Jordan to possess; you will not prolong your days in it, but will be utterly

destroyed. And the LORD will scatter you among the peoples, and you will be left few in number among the nations where the LORD will drive you. And there you will serve gods, the work of men's hands, wood and stone, which neither see nor hear nor eat nor smell."

a. **I call heaven and earth to witness against you this day:** Creation itself would testify against an idol worshipping Israel. They would be **destroyed** in the land God promised to give them.

b. **And the LORD will scatter you among the peoples:** God gave Israel the Promised Land, but not unconditionally. If they persisted in idol worship, God would remove them from the land and scatter them among the nations.

i. This is exactly what happened some 550 years later, at the time of the Babylonian Exile of Judah.

c. **There you will serve gods, the work of men's hands, which neither see nor hear nor eat nor smell:** If Israel was exiled, they would then get their fill of idols. God would put them in a land filled with idols.

i. Often, God's chastisement on us is to give us what our sinful hearts long for. If Israel wanted idols, God would give them idols.

2. (29-31) God's mercy to exiled Israel.

"But from there you will seek the LORD your God, and you will find Him if you seek Him with all your heart and with all your soul. When you are in distress, and all these things come upon you in the latter days, when you turn to the LORD your God and obey His voice (for the LORD your God is a merciful God), He will not forsake you nor destroy you, nor forget the covenant of your fathers which He swore to them."

- a. **From there you will seek the LORD your God, and you will find Him:** God would not totally abandon Israel in exile. When they were ready to turn back to the LORD, He would be ready to receive them.
- b. **If you seek Him with all your heart and with all your soul:** However, if Israel was to find the LORD, they had to seek Him with **all** their heart and **all** their soul.
 - i. In this context, to seek God with the **heart** has the idea of passionately seeking Him, seeking Him because you really want to love the LORD. Seeking God with the *soul* has the idea of seeking God with our mind, will, and emotions; with giving all of ourselves to Him.
- c. **When you turn to the LORD your God and obey His voice:** This shows that when we seek God with all our heart and all our soul, it will show itself in obedience.

3. (32-40) *The sensibility of serving God.*

"For ask now concerning the days that are past, which were before you, since the day that God created man on the earth, and ask from one end of heaven to the other, whether *any great thing* like this has happened, or *anything* like it has been heard. Did *any people ever* hear the voice of God speaking out of the midst of the fire, as you have heard, and live? Or did God ever try to go *and take* for Himself a nation from the midst of *another* nation, by trials, by signs, by wonders, by war, by a mighty hand and an outstretched arm, and by great terrors, according to all that the LORD your God did for you in Egypt before your eyes? To you it was shown, that you might know that the LORD Himself *is* God; *there is* none other besides Him. Out of heaven He let you hear His voice, that He might instruct you; on earth He showed you His great fire, and you heard His words out of the

midst of the fire. And because He loved your fathers, therefore He chose their descendants after them; and He brought you out of Egypt with His Presence, with His mighty power, driving out from before you nations greater and mightier than you, to bring you in, to give you their land as an inheritance, as it is this day. Therefore know this day, and consider it in your heart, that the LORD Himself is God in heaven above and on the earth beneath; there is no other. You shall therefore keep His statutes and His commandments which I command you today, that it may go well with you and with your children after you, and that you may prolong your days in the land which the LORD your God is giving you for all time.”

a. **For ask now:** Moses asked Israel to carefully consider **the days that are past**, and if God had ever dealt with any other nation the way He had dealt with Israel. Israel needed to know they had a special place in the plan of God.

b. **To you it was shown, that you might know that the LORD Himself is God:** Israel could *know* that the LORD was God, because of all the amazing things God did in the life of their nation.

i. In the same way, when we consider how God has touched our lives - how we have experienced the power to free us from sin, to give us hope when we are discouraged, to heal our bodies, to free our bitter hearts, to answer our prayers, to overcome the most difficult obstacles - when we consider these things, we can *know* that the **LORD Himself is God**.

c. **The LORD Himself is God in heaven above and on the earth beneath, there is no other:** Israel heard God's audible voice from heaven; they saw His holy fire

and benefited from His divine choice. They could know this from all God had done for them.

d. **You shall therefore keep His statutes and His commandments:** In light of who God is, and all He did for Israel, obedience to His commands made *perfect sense*. It was simply what should be done. We are fools to disobey such a God of love and power.

i. The LORD gives man the invitation: *Come now, and let us reason together, says the LORD (Isa 1:18)*. When we consider the alternatives, serving God is the only option. We often think that we have it hard serving the LORD, but we would be in an even worse place without Him. It has been said, "Democracy is the worst form of government ever created, except for all the others." We could also say, "Serving God is the hardest way to live, except for all the other ways."

4. (41-43) *Moses sets apart cities of refuge in the land east of the Jordan River.*

Then Moses set apart three cities on this side of the Jordan, toward the rising of the sun, that the manslayer might flee there, who kills his neighbor unintentionally, without having hated him in time past, and that by fleeing to one of these cities he might live: Bezer in the wilderness on the plateau for the Reubenites, Ramoth in Gilead for the Gadites, and Golan in Bashan for the Manassites.

a. **Then Moses set apart three cities on this side of the Jordan:** This was part of the essential preparation for entering the Promised Land. God commanded that three cities of refuge be readied on each side of the Jordan River (Num 35:14), and here, the three cities on the east side of the Jordan were appointed.

b. **Three cities on this side of the Jordan:** Moses could not appoint all six cities of refuge, because they had not yet taken the land on the western side of the Jordan River. Still, though he could not obey all of God's command to appoint six cities of refuge, he did what he could - and appointed the three on the east of the Jordan.

i. "Hence let us learn that, even when we cannot at once entirely carry out what God commands us to do, we are still to be by no means idle. For nothing but sheer laziness stands in our way, unless we speedily commence at God's command what it is His will to finish." (Calvin)

5. (44-49) *Moses will review the commandments of God with the people of Israel.*

Now this is the law which Moses set before the children of Israel. These are the testimonies, the statutes, and the judgments which Moses spoke to the children of Israel after they came out of Egypt, on this side of the Jordan, in the valley opposite Beth Peor, in the land of Sihon king of the Amorites, who dwelt at Heshbon, whom Moses and the children of Israel defeated after they came out of Egypt. And they took possession of his land and the land of Og king of Bashan, two kings of the Amorites, who were on this side of the Jordan, toward the rising of the sun, from Aroer, which is on the bank of the River Arnon, even to Mount Sion (that is, Hermon), and all the plain on the east side of the Jordan as far as the Sea of the Arabah, below the slopes of Pisgah.

a. **This is the law which Moses set before the children of Israel:** As Moses addressed the nation they were on the threshold of the Promised Land. It had been some 38 years since they received the Law of God at

Mount Sinai and now Moses reviewed and explained the Law of God with the new generation.

b. **On this side of the Jordan:** If they were going to take the Promised Land, they had to be trained in God's Word. They would not take it by a do-it-yourself spirituality, but only by obedience to the eternal word of God. The same is true for us - we will never walk in the abundant life God has for us unless we do it by His word.

The Ten Commandments

Deu 5:1 Moses called together all the people of Israel and said to them, "People of Israel, listen to all the laws that I am giving you today. Learn them and be sure that you obey them.

Deu 5:2 At Mount Sinai the LORD our God made a covenant,

Deu 5:3 not only with our fathers, but with all of us who are living today.

Deu 5:4 There on the mountain the LORD spoke to you face-to-face from the fire.

Deu 5:5 I stood between you and the LORD at that time to tell you what he said, because you were afraid of the fire and would not go up the mountain. "The LORD said,

Deu 5:6 'I am the LORD your God, who rescued you from Egypt, where you were slaves.'

Deu 5:7 " 'Worship no god but me.'

Deu 5:8 " 'Do not make for yourselves images of anything in heaven or on earth or in the water under the earth.'

Deu 5:9 Do not bow down to any idol or worship it, for I am the LORD your God and I tolerate no rivals. I bring punishment on those who hate me and on their descendants down to the third and fourth generation.

Deu 5:10 But I show my love to thousands of generations of those who love me and obey my laws.

Deu 5:11 " 'Do not use my name for evil purposes, for I, the LORD your God, will punish anyone who misuses my name.

Deu 5:12 " 'Observe the Sabbath and keep it holy, as I, the LORD your God, have commanded you.

Deu 5:13 You have six days in which to do your work,

Deu 5:14 but the seventh day is a day of rest dedicated to me. On that day no one is to work—neither you, your children, your slaves, your animals, nor the foreigners who live in your country. Your slaves must rest just as you do.

Deu 5:15 Remember that you were slaves in Egypt, and that I, the LORD your God, rescued you by my great power and strength. That is why I command you to observe the Sabbath.

Deu 5:16 " 'Respect your father and your mother, as I, the LORD your God, command you, so that all may go well with you and so that you may live a long time in the land that I am giving you.

Deu 5:17 " 'Do not commit murder.

Deu 5:18 " 'Do not commit adultery.

Deu 5:19 " 'Do not steal.

Deu 5:20 " 'Do not accuse anyone falsely.

Deu 5:21 " 'Do not desire another man's wife; do not desire his house, his land, his slaves, his cattle, his donkeys, or anything else that he owns.'

Deu 5:22 "These are the commandments the LORD gave to all of you when you were gathered at the mountain. When he spoke with a mighty voice from the fire and from the thick clouds, he gave these commandments and no others. Then he wrote them on two stone tablets and gave them to me.

Deu 5:23 "When the whole mountain was on fire and you heard the voice from the darkness, your leaders and the chiefs of your tribes came to me

Deu 5:24 and said, 'The LORD our God showed us his greatness and his glory when we heard him speak from the fire! Today we have seen that it is possible for people to continue to live, even though God has spoken to them.

Deu 5:25 But why should we risk death again? That terrible fire will destroy us. We are sure to die if we hear the LORD our God speak again.

Deu 5:26 Has any human being ever lived after hearing the living God speak from a fire?

Deu 5:27 Go back, Moses, and listen to everything that the LORD our God says. Then return and tell us what he said to you. We will listen and obey.'

Deu 5:28 "When the LORD heard this, he said to me, 'I have heard what these people said, and they are right.

Deu 5:29 If only they would always feel this way! If only they would always honor me and obey all my commands, so that everything would go well with them and their descendants forever.

Deu 5:30 Go and tell them to return to their tents.

Deu 5:31 But you, Moses, stay here with me, and I will give you all my laws and commands. Teach them to the people, so that they will obey them in the land that I am giving them.'

Deu 5:32 "People of Israel, be sure that you do everything that the LORD your God has commanded you. Do not disobey any of his laws.

Deu 5:33 Obey them all, so that everything will go well with you and so that you will continue to live in the land that you are going to occupy.

Deuteronomy 5:1-33

Deuteronomy 5 - Moses Reminds Israel of their Covenant with God at Sinai

A. The requirements of God's covenant with Israel.

1. (1-5) The setting of the covenant.

And Moses called all Israel, and said to them: "Hear, O Israel, the statutes and judgments which I speak in your hearing today, that you may learn them and be careful to observe them. The LORD our God made a covenant with us in Horeb. The LORD did not make this covenant with our fathers, but with us, those who are here today, all of us who are alive. The LORD talked with you face to face on the mountain from the midst of the fire. I stood between the LORD and you at that time, to declare to you the word of the LORD; for you were afraid because of the fire, and you did not go up the mountain. He said:

- a. **Hear, O Israel:** Israel was bound to the covenant they agreed to in Exo 24:1-8, yet the covenant was made with the previous generation which perished in the wilderness. The present generation had to understand and embrace the covenant if they were to enjoy the blessings of the covenant.
- b. **Made a covenant:** Literally, this is to "cut a covenant." The idea of "cutting" is associated with covenant because covenants were always sealed with sacrifice - the cutting of a sacrificial victim.
- c. **The LORD did not make this covenant with our fathers, but with us:** In fact, the covenant was originally made with the previous generation, and Moses did not deny this. But he drove the point home: This was *their* covenant; it is a covenant of the living, not of the dead.
- d. **The LORD talked with you face to face:** This demonstrates that the term **face to face** does not mean

"literal face to literal face," but is a Hebraic figure of speech meaning "intimate, free communication."

- i. Deu 4:12 specifically says that Israel saw *no form; you only heard a voice*. Yet they had a remarkably transparent communication with God, so the figure of speech *face to face* applies.
 - ii. This is why Exo 33:11 says *So the LORD spoke to Moses face to face, as a man speaks to his friend*, and in Exo 33:20 the LORD says, *You cannot see My face; for no man shall see Me, and live*. The use of *face to face* in Exo 33:11 is a figure of speech, meaning Moses had free and unhindered communication with the LORD.
 - iii. "*Face to face* seems to mean 'in person,' that is, in the immediacy of personal contact." (Thompson)
- e. **I stood between the LORD and you at that time:** Israel could not bear such free and unhindered communication with the LORD, so they asked Moses to speak to God on their behalf.
2. (6-7) *The first commandment: no other gods before Me.*
- 'I am the LORD your God who brought you out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of bondage. You shall have no other gods before Me.**
- a. **I am the LORD your God:** Before God commanded anything of man, He declared who He was and what He did for Israel (**who brought you out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of bondage**). The foundation was clear: because of whom God was and what He did for His people, He has the right to tell us what to do - and we have the obligation to obey Him.
 - b. **You shall have no other gods before Me:** The first commandment logically flows from understanding who

God is and what He has done for us. Nothing is to come **before** God and He is the only God we worship and serve.

- i. In the days of ancient Israel, there was great temptation to worship the gods of materialism (Baal, the god of weather and financial success) and sex (Ashtoreth, the goddess of sex, romance, and reproduction), or any number of other local deities. We are tempted to worship the same gods, but without the old-fashioned names and images.
- c. **No other gods before Me:** This did not imply that it was permissible to have other gods, as long as they lined up behind the true God. Instead the idea is that there are to be no other gods before the sight of the true God in our life. **Before Me** is literally, "to My face."

- i. This means God demands to be more than "added" to our lives. We don't just add Jesus to the life we already have. We must give Him all our lives.
- ii. Failure to obey this commandment is called *idolatry*. We are to flee idolatry (1Co 10:14). Those lives marked by habitual idolatry will not inherit the kingdom of God (1Co 6:9-10, Eph 5:5, Rev 21:8; Rev 22:15). Idolatry is a work of the flesh (Gal 5:19-20), which marks our old life instead of the new (1Pe 4:3), and we are not to associate with those who call themselves Christians who are idolaters (1Co 5:11).

3. (8-10) *The second commandment: You shall not make for yourself any carved image... you shall not bow down to them.*

'You shall not make for yourself a carved image; any likeness of anything that is in heaven above, or that is in the earth beneath, or that is in the water under the

earth; you shall not bow down to them nor serve them. For I, the LORD your God, am a jealous God, visiting the iniquity of the fathers upon the children to the third and fourth *generations* of those who hate Me, but showing mercy to thousands, to those who love Me and keep My commandments.

a. You shall not make for yourself a carved image:

The second commandment prohibited not only idolatry regarding false gods, it also dealt with making an image of any created thing which we might worship.

b. Or any likeness of anything that is in heaven above, or that is in the earth beneath: In that day as well as in our own, worship was tied closely with images - idealized images, or even images in the mind of man. God will not allow us to depict Him with any such image, nor replace Him with another image.

i. The second commandment didn't forbid making an image of something for artistic purposes. God Himself commanded Israel make images of cherubim (Exo 25:18; Exo 26:31). It forbade the making of images as an "aid" to worship.

ii. "To countenance its *image worship*, the *Roman Catholic Church* has left the whole of this second commandment out of the decalogue, and thus lost one whole commandment out of the *ten*; but to keep up the *number* they have divided the *tenth* into *two*." (Clarke)

iii. Joh 4:24 explains the rationale behind the second commandment: *God is Spirit, and those who worship Him must worship in spirit and truth.* The use of images and other material things as a focus or "help" to worship denies who God is (*Spirit*) and how we must worship Him (*in spirit and truth*).

iv. Paul reminds us of the futility of trying to make God into our own image: *Professing to be wise, they became fools, and changed the glory of the incorruptible God into an image made like corruptible man; and birds and four-footed animals and creeping things.* (Rom 1:22-23)

c. **For I, the LORD your God, am a jealous God:** How can it be said that God is a **jealous God**? "God's jealousy is love in action. He refuses to share the human heart with any rival, not because He is selfish and wants us all for Himself, but because He knows that upon that loyalty to Him depends our very moral life... God is not jealous of us: He is jealous *for us.*" (Redpath)

d. **Visiting the iniquity of the fathers on the children to the third and fourth generations of those who hate Me:** This does not mean God punishes us directly for the sins of our ancestors. The important words are **of those who hate Me** - if the descendants love God, they will not have the iniquity of the fathers visited on them.

i. "This necessarily implies - IF *the children walk in the steps of their fathers;* for no man can be condemned by Divine justice for a crime of which he was never guilty." (Clarke)

ii. Yet, the focus here is on idolatry, and this refers to judgment on a *national* scale - nations that forsake the LORD will be judged, and that judgment will have effects throughout generations.

4. (11) *The third commandment: You shall not take the name of the LORD your God in vain.*

'You shall not take the name of the LORD your God in vain, for the LORD will not hold him guiltless who takes His name in vain.

a. **You shall not take the name of the LORD your God in vain:** We can break the third commandment through *profanity* (using the name of God in blasphemy and cursing), *frivolity* (using the name of God in a superficial, stupid way), and *hypocrisy* (claiming the name of God but acting in a way that disgraces Him).

i. Jesus communicated the idea of this command in the disciple's prayer, when He taught us to have a regard for the holiness of God's name (*Hallowed be Your name, Mat 6:9*).

b. **For the LORD will not hold him guiltless who takes His name in vain:** The strength of this command has led to strange traditions among the Jewish people. Some go to extreme lengths in attempting to fulfill this command, refusing to even write out the name of God, in the fear that the paper might be destroyed, and the name of God be written **in vain**.

5. (12-15) *The fourth commandment: Remember the Sabbath day.*

'Observe the Sabbath day, to keep it holy, as the LORD your God commanded you. Six days you shall labor and do all your work, but the seventh day is the Sabbath of the LORD your God. In it you shall do no work: you, nor your son, nor your daughter, nor your male servant, nor your female servant, nor your ox, nor your donkey, nor any of your cattle, nor your stranger who is within your gates, that your male servant and your female servant may rest as well as you. And remember that you were a slave in the land of Egypt, and the LORD your God brought you out from there by a mighty hand and by an outstretched arm; therefore the LORD your God commanded you to keep the Sabbath day.'

a. **Remember the Sabbath day, to keep it holy:** The seventh day (Saturday) was commanded to be respected as a day of rest. This rest was for all of Israel - servants and slaves as well as visitors.

i. This is an important principle that might be too easily passed over. Here God declared the essential humanity and dignity of women, slaves, and strangers, and said they had the same right to a day of rest as the free Israeli man. This was certainly a radical concept in the ancient world.

ii. In fact, in Moses' exposition of the Law here in Deuteronomy, he pays special stress on the fact that the Sabbath is for the foreign-born slaves among Israel. **Deu 5:15 (And remember that you were a slave in the land of Egypt)** is not cited in Exodus 20.

b. **To keep it holy:** In their traditions, the Jewish people came to carefully quantify what they thought could and could not be done on the Sabbath day, in order to **keep it holy.**

i. For example, in **Luk 6:1-2**, in the mind of the Jewish leaders, the disciples were guilty of four violations of the Sabbath every time they took a bite of grain out in the field, because they reaped, threshed, winnowed, and prepared food.

ii. Ancient Rabbis taught that on the Sabbath, a man could not carry something in his right hand or in his left hand, across his chest or on his shoulder. But he could carry something with the back of his hand, his foot, his elbow, or in his ear, his hair, or in the hem of his shirt, or in his shoe or sandal. Or, on the Sabbath, you Israelites were forbidden to tie a knot - except, a woman could tie a knot in her girdle. So, if a bucket of water had to be raised from a well, an Israelite could

not tie a rope to the bucket, but a woman could tie her girdle to the bucket and pull it up from the well.

iii. In observant Jewish homes today, one cannot turn on a light, a stove, or a switch on the Sabbath. It is forbidden to drive a certain distance or to make a telephone call - all carefully regulated by traditions seeking to spell out the law exactly.

c. **For in six days the LORD made the heavens and the earth:** God established the pattern for the Sabbath at the time of creation. When He rested from His works on the seventh day, God made the seventh day a day of rest from all our works (Gen 2:3). But the most important purpose of the Sabbath was to serve as a shadow of the rest we have in Jesus.

i. Some claim that Christians are required to keep the Sabbath today. But the New Testament makes it clear that Christians are not under obligation to observe a Sabbath day (Col 2:16-17 and Gal 4:9-11), because Jesus fulfilled the purpose and plan of the Sabbath *for us and in us* (Heb 4:9-11).

ii. Gal 4:10 tells us that Christians are not bound to observe *days and months and seasons and years*. The rest we enter into as Christians is something to experience every day, not just one day a week - the rest of knowing we don't have to work to save ourselves, but our salvation is accomplished in Jesus (Heb 4:9-10).

iii. The Sabbath commanded here and observed by Israel was a *shadow of things to come, but the substance is of Christ* (Col 2:16-17). We have a rest in Jesus that is ours to live in every day. Therefore, since the shadow of the Sabbath is fulfilled in Jesus, we are free to keep any day - or no day - as a Sabbath after the custom of ancient Israel.

iv. However, though we are free from the legal obligation of the Sabbath, we dare not ignore the importance of a day of rest - God has built us so that we *need* one. Like a car that needs regular maintenance, we need regular rest - or we will not "wear" well. Some people are like high mileage cars that haven't been maintained well, and it shows.

v. Some Christians are also dogmatic about observing Saturday as the Sabbath as opposed to Sunday. But because we are free to regard all days as given to God, it makes no difference. But in some ways, Sunday is more appropriate; being the day Jesus rose from the dead (Mar 16:9), and first met with His disciples (Joh 20:19), and a day when Christians gathered for fellowship (Act 20:7 and 1Co 16:2). Under Law, men worked towards God's rest; but after Jesus' finished work on the cross, the believer enters into rest and goes from that rest out to work.

vi. But we are also commanded to *work* six days. "He who idles his time away in the *six* days is equally culpable in the sight of God as he who works on the *seventh*." (Clarke) Many Christians should give more "leisure time" to the work of the LORD. Every Christian should have a *deliberate* way to serve God and advance the Kingdom of Jesus Christ.

6. (16) *The fifth commandment: honor your father and your mother.*

'Honor your father and your mother, as the LORD your God has commanded you, that your days may be long, and that it may be well with you in the land which the LORD your God is giving you.'

a. **Honor your father and your mother:** Honor for fathers and mothers is an essential building block for the stability and health of all society. If the younger

generations are constantly at war with older generations, the foundations of society will be destroyed.

- i. Jesus used the way the Pharisees interpreted this commandment as an example of how one might keep the law with a limited interpretation, yet violate the spirit of the commandment (Mat 15:3-6).
- b. **That your days may be long:** In Eph 6:2 Paul repeated this command, emphasizing the promise stated here: **that your days may be long upon the land.** Rebellion is costly, and many have paid a high price personally for their rebellion against their parents.

*7. (17) The sixth commandment: **You shall not murder.***

'You shall not murder.

a. **You shall not murder:** Some wonder how God can approve both capital punishment (Exo 19:12) and this prohibition of murder. The simple answer is that in Hebrew as well as English, there is a distinction between *to kill* and *to murder*. As opposed to killing, **murder** is the taking of life without legal justification (execution after due process) or moral justification (killing in defense).

b. **You shall not murder:** Jesus carefully explained the heart of this commandment. He showed that it also prohibits us from hating someone else (Mat 5:21-26), because we can wish someone dead in our hearts, yet never have the "courage" to commit the deed. Someone may not kill from a lack of courage or initiative, though his or her heart is filled with hatred.

*8. (18) The seventh commandment: **You shall not commit adultery.***

'You shall not commit adultery.

a. **You shall not commit adultery:** Recognize that the *act itself* is condemned. God allows no justification for the ways that many people often seek to justify extra-marital sex, such as saying "my partner doesn't understand me" or "we are in love" or "God led us to be with each other" or any other excuse.

i. Michael English, who lost his recording contract and marriage over adultery with another Christian music singer, says of his adultery and its aftermath: "Maybe God allowed this to happen to make me see I needed some freedom." No!

b. **You shall not commit adultery:** The New Testament clearly condemns adultery: *Now the works of the flesh are evident, which are: adultery, fornication uncleanness, licentiousness... (Gal 5:19)*. But more than the act itself, Jesus carefully explained the heart of this commandment. It prohibits us from looking *at a woman to lust for her*, where we commit adultery in our heart or mind, yet may not have the courage or opportunity to do the act (Mat 5:27-30). We aren't innocent just because we didn't have the opportunity to sin the way we really wanted to.

9. (19) *The eighth commandment: You shall not steal.*

'You shall not steal.

a. **Not steal:** This command is another important foundation for human society, establishing the right to personal property. God has clearly entrusted certain possessions to certain individuals, and other people or states are not permitted to take that property without due process of law.

b. **Not steal:** We can also steal from God. Of course, this demands we honor God with our financial resources, so we are not guilty of robbing Him (Mal 3:8-10). But we

can also rob God by refusing to give Him ourselves for obedience and His service, because He bought us and owns us: *knowing that you were not redeemed with corruptible things, like silver or gold... but with the precious blood of Christ (1Pe 1:18-19); For you were bought at a price; therefore glorify God in your body and in your spirit, which are God's (1Co 6:20).*

c. **Not steal:** Eph 4:28 gives the solution to stealing. *Let him who stole steal no longer, but rather let him labor, working with his hands what is good, that he may have something to give him who has need.*

10. (20) The ninth commandment: You shall not bear false witness.

'You shall not bear false witness against your neighbor.

a. **You shall not bear false witness against your neighbor:** We can break the ninth commandment through slander, talebearing, creating false impressions, by silence, by questioning the motives behind someone's actions, or even by flattery.

i. "Slander... is a lie invented and spread with intent to do harm. That is the worst form of injury a person can do to another. Compared to one who does this, a gangster is a gentleman, and a murderer is kind, because he ends life in a moment with a stroke and with little pain. But the man guilty of slander ruins a reputation which may never be regained, and causes lifelong suffering." (Redpath)

ii. "Talebearing... is repeating a report about a person without careful investigation. Many, many times I have known what it is to suffer with that. To repeat a story which brings discredit and dishonor to another person without making sure of the facts, is breaking

this commandment... How many people, especially Christian people, revel in this, and delight in working havoc by telling tales about others. To excuse the action by saying they believed the report to be true, or that there was no intention to malign, is no justification." (Redpath)

iii. What about inappropriate silence? "When someone utters a falsity about another and a third person is present who knows that statement to be untrue but, for reasons of fear or being disliked, remains quiet, that third person is as guilty of breaking this law as if he had told a lie." (Redpath)

b. **You shall not bear false witness against your neighbor:** The New Testament puts it simply. *Do not lie to one another, since you have put off the old man with his deeds* (Col 3:9) "How very strange that we have ever come to think that Christian maturity is shown by the ability to speak our minds, whereas it is really expressed in controlling our tongues." (Redpath)

i. "What a startling revelation it would be if a tape recording could be played of all that every church member has said about his fellow members in one week!" (Redpath)

ii. Satan is always there to encourage a lie (Joh 8:44; Act 5:3); and Jesus Himself was the victim of *false witness* (Mar 14:57); in some ways, we might say this was the sin that sent Jesus to the cross.

11. (21) The tenth commandment: You shall not covet.

'You shall not covet your neighbor's wife; and you shall not desire your neighbor's house, his field, his male servant, his female servant, his ox, his donkey, or anything that is your neighbor's.

a. **You shall not covet:** All the first nine commands focus more on things we do; the tenth deals straight with the heart and its desires.

i. Literally, the word for “**covet**” here means, “to pant after.” Covetousness works like this: the eyes look upon an object, the mind admires it, the will goes over to it, and the body moves in to possess it. Just because you have not taken the final step does not mean you are not in the process of coveting right now.

b. **Your neighbor's house... wife... ox... donkey:** Covetousness can be expressed towards all sorts of things; it is the itch to have and to possess what someone else has. It speaks of a dissatisfaction with what we have, and a jealousy towards those who have something “better.”

i. Heb 13:5 puts it well: *Let your conduct be without covetousness; be content with such things as you have. For He Himself has said, “I will never leave you nor forsake you.”*

ii. This last commandment is closely connected with the first commandment against idolatry: *For this you know, that no... covetous man, who is an idolater, has any inheritance in the kingdom of Christ and God (Eph 5:5).*

iii. Jesus gave a special warning about covetousness, which explained the core philosophy of the covetous heart: *And He said to them, “Take heed and beware of covetousness, for one’s life does not consist in the abundance of the things he possesses.”* (Luk 12:15)

B. The response of Israel and the response of God at Mount Sinai.

1. (22-27) *The response of Israel: shrinking fear.*

"These words the LORD spoke to all your assembly, in the mountain from the midst of the fire, the cloud, and the thick darkness, with a loud voice; and He added no more. And He wrote them on two tablets of stone and gave them to me. So it was, when you heard the voice from the midst of the darkness, while the mountain was burning with fire, that you came near to me, all the heads of your tribes and your elders. And you said: 'Surely the LORD our God has shown us His glory and His greatness, and we have heard His voice from the midst of the fire. We have seen this day that God speaks with man; yet he *still* lives. Now therefore, why should we die? For this great fire will consume us; if we hear the voice of the LORD our God anymore, then we shall die. For who *is there* of all flesh who has heard the voice of the living God speaking from the midst of the fire, as we *have*, and lived? You go near and hear all that the LORD our God may say, and tell us all that the LORD our God says to you, and we will hear and do *it*.'

a. **In the mountain from the midst of the fire, the cloud, and the thick darkness, with a loud voice:**

The whole scene was indeed awesome: **The LORD spoke;** there was **fire**, a **cloud**, **thick darkness**, a **loud voice**; and it all made such an impression on Israel that they asked Moses to not have God speak to them so directly any more.

i. **Why should we die... if we hear the voice of the LORD our God anymore, then we shall die**

makes it plain. The Mount Sinai experience was not one of sweet fellowship with God. The message of Mount Sinai was not "come unto Me," but "stay away, for I am holy, and you are not."

ii. This is exactly the message of the writer to the Hebrews in Heb 12:18-24 : We, under the New Covenant, *have not* come to Mount Sinai and the message "stay away"; we have come to Mount Zion, where God's message is "come unto Me."

b. **Tell us all that the LORD our God says to you, and we will hear and do it:** Israel was far too confident in their ability to keep the law of God. Their experience at Mount Sinai convinced them of God's glory, but not of their own corruption and inability.

2. (28-33) *God responds with hopeful pleasure in Israel.*

"Then the LORD heard the voice of your words when you spoke to me, and the LORD said to me: 'I have heard the voice of the words of this people which they have spoken to you. They are right *in* all that they have spoken. Oh, that they had such a heart in them that they would fear Me and always keep all My commandments, that it might be well with them and with their children forever! Go and say to them, "Return to your tents." But as for you, stand here by Me, and I will speak to you all the commandments, the statutes, and the judgments which you shall teach them, that they may observe *them* in the land which I am giving them to possess.' Therefore you shall be careful to do as the LORD your God has commanded you; you shall not turn aside to the right hand or to the left. You shall walk in all the ways which the LORD your God has commanded you, that you may live and *that it may be* well with you, and *that* you may prolong your days in the land which you shall possess.

a. **They are right in all they have spoken:** God was pleased with Israel's response. Their response was evidence that they took Him seriously.

b. **Oh, that they had such a heart:** The feeling is that God liked what He saw in Israel, but “hoped” (to use a figure of speech, because God doesn’t “hope” for things the way we do) that they would *keep* the same attitude of heart. In fact, Israel did not keep this heart; not 40 days later they danced in worship around a golden calf.

c. **That it might be well with them and their children forever:** This is God’s motive in calling for our obedience - **that it might be well** with us. Every command of God is rooted in love for us, not some obsessive desire for control, or mean-spirited attitude towards us.

d. **Therefore you shall be careful to do as the LORD your God has commanded you:** Knowing the glory of God (as revealed at Mount Sinai) and the love of God (as revealed by His longing **that it might be well with them**), gave them all the more reason to obey God.

i. When we have trouble obeying God, we are clearly lacking in one or both of these areas. Either we forget His glory, or we forget His love for us, or we forget both of them.

The Greatest Commandment

Deu 6:1 "These are all the laws that the LORD your God commanded me to teach you. Obey them in the land that you are about to enter and occupy.

Deu 6:2 As long as you live, you and your descendants are to honor the LORD your God and obey all his laws that I am giving you, so that you may live in that land a long time.

Deu 6:3 Listen to them, people of Israel, and obey them! Then all will go well with you, and you will become a mighty nation and live in that rich and fertile land, just as the LORD, the God of our ancestors, has promised.

Deu 6:4 "Israel, remember this! The LORD—and the LORD alone—is our God.

Deu 6:5 Love the LORD your God with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your strength.

Deu 6:6 Never forget these commands that I am giving you today.

Deu 6:7 Teach them to your children. Repeat them when you are at home and when you are away, when you are resting and when you are working.

Deu 6:8 Tie them on your arms and wear them on your foreheads as a reminder.

Deu 6:9 Write them on the doorposts of your houses and on your gates.

Deu 6:10 "Just as the LORD your God promised your ancestors, Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, he will give you a land with large and prosperous cities which you did not build.

Deu 6:11 The houses will be full of good things which you did not put in them, and there will be wells that you did not dig, and vineyards and olive orchards that you did not plant. When the LORD brings you into this land and you have all you want to eat,

Deu 6:12 make certain that you do not forget the LORD who rescued you from Egypt, where you were slaves.

Deu 6:13 Honor the LORD your God, worship only him, and make your promises in his name alone.

Deu 6:14 Do not worship other gods, any of the gods of the peoples around you.

Deu 6:15 If you do worship other gods, the LORD's anger will come against you like fire and will destroy you completely, because the LORD your God, who is present with you, tolerates no rivals.

Deu 6:16 "Do not put the LORD your God to the test, as you did at Massah.

Deu 6:17 Be sure that you obey all the laws that he has given you.

Deu 6:18 Do what the LORD says is right and good, and all will go well with you. You will be able to take possession of the fertile land that the LORD promised your ancestors,

Deu 6:19 and you will drive out your enemies, as he promised.

Deu 6:20 "In times to come your children will ask you, 'Why did the LORD our God command us to obey all these laws?'

Deu 6:21 Then tell them, 'We were slaves of the king of Egypt, and the LORD rescued us by his great power.'

Deu 6:22 With our own eyes we saw him work miracles and do terrifying things to the Egyptians and to their king and to all his officials.

Deu 6:23 He freed us from Egypt to bring us here and give us this land, as he had promised our ancestors he would.

Deu 6:24 Then the LORD our God commanded us to obey all these laws and to honor him. If we do, he will always watch over our nation and keep it prosperous.

Deu 6:25 If we faithfully obey everything that God has commanded us, he will be pleased with us.'

Deuteronomy 6:1-25

Deuteronomy 6 - Moses Reminds Israel of the Commandment and the Warning

A. The Commandment: The essence of God's law.

1. (1-3) *Remember the commandment before entering Canaan.*

Now this is the commandment, and these are the statutes and judgments which the LORD your God has commanded to teach you, that you may observe them in the land which you are crossing over to possess,

that you may fear the LORD your God, to keep all His statutes and His commandments which I command you, you and your son and your grandson, all the days of your life, and that your days may be prolonged. Therefore hear, O Israel, and be careful to observe it, that it may be well with you, and that you may multiply greatly as the LORD God of your fathers has promised you; "a land flowing with milk and honey."

- a. **Now this is the commandment:** The Hebrew is emphatic here. Moses called attention to **The Commandment**. In the following verses, God reduced the law to one ruling principle - one commandment that encompassed all the commandments.
- b. **That your days may be prolonged... that it may be well with you:** Israel's fate rested on their obedience to this one great commandment. If they obeyed their commandment, their life would be long and filled with blessing. If they did not obey they could expect to be cursed by God.

2. (4-5) *The great commandment: Love the LORD your God.*

Hear, O Israel: The LORD our God, the LORD is one! You shall love the LORD your God with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your strength.

- a. **Hear, O Israel:** In Hebrew, these verses are known as the *Shema* ("hear" in Hebrew). It is the classic Hebrew confession of faith, describing who God is and what our duty is towards Him.
- b. **The LORD our God, the LORD is one:** This is the essential truth about God. He is a person and not a vague pantheistic force. Being **one**, He cannot be represented by contradictory images. Since **the LORD**

our God is one, He is not Baal, or Ashtoreth - He is the LORD God, and they are not.

i. In the mind of many Jewish people, this verse alone disqualified the New Testament teaching that Jesus is God, and the New Testament teaching of the Trinity - that there is one God, existing in three Persons. At some times and places, as Jewish synagogues said the *Shema* together, and when the word **one** (*echad*) was said, they loudly and strongly repeated that one word for several minutes, as if it were a rebuke to Christians who believed in the Trinity.

ii. Christians must come to a renewed understanding of the unity of God. They must appreciate the fact that **the LORD is one**, not three, as 1Co 8:6 says: *yet for us there is one God*. We worship one God, existing in three persons, not three separate gods.

iii. Yet, the statement **the LORD is one** certainly does not contradict the truth of the Trinity. In fact, it establishes that truth. The Hebrew word for **one** is *echad*, which speaks most literally of a compound unity, instead of using the Hebrew word *yacheed*, which speaks of an absolute unity or singularity (Gen 22:2 and Psa 25:16).

iv. The very first use of *echad* in the Bible is in Gen 1:5 : *So the evening and the morning were the first day*. Even here, we see a unity (one day) with the idea of plurality (made up of evening and morning).

- Gen 2:24 uses *echad* in saying *the two shall become one flesh*. Again, the idea of a unity (one flesh), making a plurality (the two).
- In Exo 26:6; Exo 26:11, the fifty gold clasps are used to hold the curtains together, so the tent would

be *one* (*echad*) - a unity (one) made up of a plurality (the many parts of the tabernacle).

- In Eze 37:17 the LORD tells Ezekiel to join together two sticks (prophetically representing Ephraim and Judah) into *one* (*echad*), speaking again of a unity (one stick) made up of a plurality (the two sticks).

- v. There is no way that *echad* has the exclusive idea of an absolute singularity; the idea of One God in Three Persons fits just fine with the term *echad*.

c. **The LORD our God:** In addition, even the name of **God** in this line suggests the plurality of God. The Hebrew word is *Elohim* and grammatically, it is a plural word used as if it were singular - the verbs and pronouns used with it are generally in the plural.

- i. Rabbi Simeon ben Joachi, commenting on the word *Elohim*: "Come and see the mystery of the word Elohim; there are *three degrees*, and each degree by itself *alone*, and yet notwithstanding they are all *one*, and *joined together* in *one*, and are not divided from each other." Clarke adds: "He must be strangely prejudiced indeed who cannot see that the doctrine of a Trinity, and of a Trinity in unity, is expressed in the above words."

- ii. Leupold quoting Luther on *Elohim*: "But we have clear testimony that Moses aimed to indicate the Trinity or the three persons in the one divine nature."

d. **Love the LORD your God with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your might:** Knowing who God is enables us to act towards Him rightly. We give Him His due.

- i. God wants a complete love from us. This love is appropriate because He loved us completely: *We love Him because He first loved us* (1Jn 4:19).

ii. What God most wants from us is our **love**. We often think God demands a hundred other things from us - our money, our time, our effort, our will, our submission, and so forth - but what God really wants is our love. When we really love the LORD with all of our heart, soul, and mind, then everything else is freely given to the LORD. If we give the LORD all the rest - money, time, effort, will, and so forth - without giving Him our love, it is all wasted - and perhaps, all is lost.

iii. Jesus called this *the great commandment* (Mat 22:37-38); and He said the second commandment, *you shall love your neighbor as yourself*, was like this first, great commandment. When we love the LORD our God with all our heart, soul, and mind, we will find it easy to love our neighbor as ourselves.

3. (6-9) *The continual reminder of the Law.*

And these words which I command you today shall be in your heart. You shall teach them diligently to your children, and shall talk of them when you sit in your house, when you walk by the way, when you lie down, and when you rise up. You shall bind them as a sign on your hand, and they shall be as frontlets between your eyes. You shall write them on the doorposts of your house and on your gates.

a. **These words which I command you today shall be in your heart:** This great command must first be in our **heart**. Then it must be communicated to our **children**, the topic of our conversation, and should always be in front of us - as near as our hand or our forehead, as ever before us as our door posts and gates.

b. **You shall bind them as a sign on your hand:** By the time of Jesus the Jewish people based the practice of

wearing phylacteries on this passage. Phylacteries are small boxes holding parchment with scriptures on them, held to the forehead or hand with leather straps.

i. Jesus condemned abuse of the wearing of phylacteries among the Pharisees; they would make their phylactery boxes large and ostentatious as a display of greater spirituality (Mat 23:5).

ii. In the end times, there will be a Satanic imitation of this practice, when the number of the Antichrist will be applied to either the hand or forehead of all who will take it (Rev 13:16).

c. **You shall write them on the doorposts of your houses:** This command leads to the Jewish practice of the *mezuzah*. This is a small container holding a passage of Scripture that is nailed to a doorpost.

B. The danger of disobedience.

1. (10-12) *The danger of leaving God in times of prosperity.*

So it shall be, when the LORD your God brings you into the land of which He swore to your fathers, to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, to give you large and beautiful cities which you did not build, houses full of all good things, which you did not fill, hewn-out wells which you did not dig, vineyards and olive trees which you did not plant; when you have eaten and are full; then beware, lest you forget the LORD who brought you out of the land of Egypt, from the house of bondage.

a. **To give you large and beautiful cities which you did not build:** God planned to bring Israel into an abundant, prepared land. In this abundant blessing God had for Israel, there was an inherent danger: That they would **forget the LORD who brought you out of the land of Egypt.**

b. **Lest you forget the LORD:** This cycle would be repeated through the history of Israel, especially in the time of the Judges. God would bless an obedient Israel, and they would prosper; they would begin to set their heart on the blessings instead of the LORD who blessed them; God would allow chastisement to turn Israel's focus back upon Him; Israel would repent and obey again, and God would again bless an obedient Israel and they would prosper.

- i. We usually fail to appreciate the danger of success and prosperity; we agree there is a *theoretical* danger in those things, but rarely think it applies to us.
- ii. It is just a lot easier to **forget the LORD your brought you out... from the house of bondage** when there are no circumstances forcing you to remember Him.

2. (13-19) *How to avoid apostasy in times of prosperity: honoring the LORD in everything we do.*

You shall fear the LORD your God and serve Him, and shall take oaths in His name. You shall not go after other gods, the gods of the peoples who are all around you (for the LORD your God is a jealous God among you), lest the anger of the LORD your God be aroused against you and destroy you from the face of the earth. You shall not tempt the LORD your God as you tempted *Him* in Massah. You shall diligently keep the commandments of the LORD your God, His testimonies, and His statutes which He has commanded you. And you shall do *what is* right and good in the sight of the LORD, that it may be well with you, and that you may go in and possess the good land of which the LORD swore to your fathers, to cast out all your enemies from before you, as the LORD has spoken.

a. **You shall fear the LORD your God and serve Him:** When we do this, the idea is not of a shrinking fear from an angry God. Instead, the idea of

fear is more in the concept of an awe-filled respect, an inner repulsion at the idea of offending such a great, loving God who has done so much for us.

i. This is the passage of Scripture Jesus quoted back to Satan when tempted by Satan to avoid the cross and win back the world if He would only bow down and worship Satan. Jesus rightly replies, based on the truth **You shall fear the LORD your God and serve Him** that it was only right to fear, and worship, and serve God - and it was wrong to bow down to Satan, no matter what might be given Him in return (Mat 4:8-10).

b. **And shall take oaths in His name:** although the concept of the oath in God's name can certainly be abused (as Jesus pointed out in Mat 5:33-37), there certainly is a permissible use of oaths by those who follow God - since God Himself uses oaths (Heb 6:13). Here, Israel is being told, "you are to swear an oath only in the name of the LORD, not in the name of any other god."

c. **You shall not tempt the LORD your God as you tempted Him at Massah:** In Exo 17:1-7, Israel tempted the LORD by doubting His love and concern for them. This was tempting or testing God regarding His love for Israel, something that is not only high-handed against the LORD (because we have no right to administer a test to the Almighty) but also disregarding His previous, and constant demonstrations of love and care for Israel (by demanding that God prove His love for them now by giving them what they want).

i. Anytime we deny God's love for us, or demand He do something for us, we are testing Him as if He must answer to our standards and tempting Him to judge us.

ii. This is the passage of Scripture which Jesus quoted back to Satan in the wilderness, when tempted to make God the Father prove His love for the Son by spectacularly protecting Jesus if He should jump off the pinnacle of the temple (Mat 4:5-7). Jesus knew it was wrong to demand this sort of "proof" from His Father, since every day was proof of God the Father's love for the Son!

d. **And you shall do what is right... that it may be well with you:** This theme is constantly repeated. Under the Old Covenant, Israel's blessing was based on their obedience. When they obeyed they would be blessed; when they disobeyed they would be cursed.

i. This is not the source of blessing in the New Covenant. In the New Covenant, we are blessed by faith in Jesus since He fulfills the law in our place (Rom 8:3-4). The watchwords for blessing under the Old Covenant were *earning* and *deserving*; under the New Covenant, blessing comes by *believing* and *receiving*.

ii. The New Covenant system works because when we receive the New Covenant, God sends with it an inner transformation, where the law of God and the desire to do His will is now written on our hearts. Through the New Covenant, God makes us "safe" for His grace by this inner transformation.

iii. Under the New Covenant there is no *judgment* from God for our disobedience, because all the judgment we deserved was put upon Jesus at the cross. However, there may be *correction* from the

hand of a loving God the Father (not in the sense of making us pay for our sin, but in the sense of training us not to continue in sin), and there are the *natural consequences* of our disobedience, which God has not promised to shield us from.

iv. Christians who fear the “freedom” of a New Covenant relationship with God must ask this question: did Israel come to great obedience to God through the Old Covenant? Does the system of earning and deserving blessing make us truly godlier than the system of believing and receiving? Or does it leave us either in total desperation (where one can then look to Jesus), or in total pride in our own works before God (as were the religious leaders of Jesus’ day who had a significant hand in crucifying Him)?

*3. (20-25) How to avoid apostasy in times of prosperity:
Teach your children to understand and honor the LORD.*

When your son asks you in time to come, saying, “What is the meaning of the testimonies, the statutes, and the judgments which the LORD our God has commanded you?” then you shall say to your son: “We were slaves of Pharaoh in Egypt, and the LORD brought us out of Egypt with a mighty hand; and the LORD showed signs and wonders before our eyes, great and severe, against Egypt, Pharaoh, and all his household. Then He brought us out from there, that He might bring us in, to give us the land of which He swore to our fathers. And the LORD commanded us to observe all these statutes, to fear the LORD our God, for our good always, that He might preserve us alive, as it is this day. Then it will be righteousness for us, if we are careful to observe all these commandments before the LORD our God, as He has commanded us.”

- a. **When your son asks you in time to come:** Often, the apostasy that comes from prosperity afflicts the next generation more than the present. They grow up *expecting* such prosperity and blessing, without understanding the repentance and walk with God that led to the prosperity.
- b. **Then you shall say to your son:** Therefore, it was essential for Israel to teach and warn their children, so that the blessings given to one generation would not become a curse to the next generation.
 - i. Key to the teaching was the simple recounting of Israel's testimony - how God saved them from the bondage of Egypt. Parents need to relate to their children how *they* came to a personal relationship with Jesus, so the children understand that *they* must come to the same relationship.
- c. **It will be righteousness for us, if we are careful to observe all these commandments:** If one will obtain true righteousness through the law, it is simple (though not easy): observe all the commandments. But if you are lacking in observing any commandment, then you need the atonement of a Perfect Sacrifice - Jesus Christ, the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world.

A Chosen People

Deu 7:1 "The LORD your God will bring you into the land that you are going to occupy, and he will drive many nations out of it. As you advance, he will drive out seven nations larger and more powerful than you: the Hittites, the Gergashites, the Amorites, the Canaanites, the Perizzites, the Hivites, and the Jebusites.

Deu 7:2 When the LORD your God places these people in your power and you defeat them, you must put them all to

death. Do not make an alliance with them or show them any mercy.

Deu 7:3 Do not marry any of them, and do not let your children marry any of them,

Deu 7:4 because then they would lead your children away from the LORD to worship other gods. If that happens, the LORD will be angry with you and destroy you at once.

Deu 7:5 So then, tear down their altars, break their sacred stone pillars in pieces, cut down their symbols of the goddess Asherah, and burn their idols.

Deu 7:6 Do this because you belong to the LORD your God. From all the peoples on earth he chose you to be his own special people.

Deu 7:7 "The LORD did not love you and choose you because you outnumbered other peoples; you were the smallest nation on earth.

Deu 7:8 But the LORD loved you and wanted to keep the promise that he made to your ancestors. That is why he saved you by his great might and set you free from slavery to the king of Egypt.

Deu 7:9 Remember that the LORD your God is the only God and that he is faithful. He will keep his covenant and show his constant love to a thousand generations of those who love him and obey his commands,

Deu 7:10 but he will not hesitate to punish those who hate him.

Deu 7:11 Now then, obey what you have been taught; obey all the laws that I have given you today.

Deu 7:12 "If you listen to these commands and obey them faithfully, then the LORD your God will continue to keep his covenant with you and will show you his constant love, as he promised your ancestors.

Deu 7:13 He will love you and bless you, so that you will increase in number and have many children; he will bless

your fields, so that you will have grain, wine, and olive oil; and he will bless you by giving you many cattle and sheep. He will give you all these blessings in the land that he promised your ancestors he would give to you.

Deu 7:14 No people in the world will be as richly blessed as you. None of you nor any of your livestock will be sterile.

Deu 7:15 The LORD will protect you from all sickness, and he will not bring on you any of the dreadful diseases that you experienced in Egypt, but he will bring them on all your enemies.

Deu 7:16 Destroy every nation that the LORD your God places in your power, and do not show them any mercy. Do not worship their gods, for that would be fatal.

Deu 7:17 "Do not tell yourselves that these peoples outnumber you and that you cannot drive them out.

Deu 7:18 Do not be afraid of them; remember what the LORD your God did to the king of Egypt and to all his people.

Deu 7:19 Remember the terrible plagues that you saw with your own eyes, the miracles and wonders, and the great power and strength by which the LORD your God set you free. In the same way that he destroyed the Egyptians, he will destroy all these people that you now fear.

Deu 7:20 He will even cause panic among them and will destroy those who escape and go into hiding.

Deu 7:21 So do not be afraid of these people. The LORD your God is with you; he is a great God and one to be feared.

Deu 7:22 Little by little he will drive out these nations as you advance. You will not be able to destroy them all at once, for, if you did, the number of wild animals would increase and be a threat to you.

Deu 7:23 The LORD will put your enemies in your power and make them panic until they are destroyed.

Deu 7:24 He will put their kings in your power. You will kill them, and they will be forgotten. No one will be able to stop you; you will destroy everyone.

Deu 7:25 Burn their idols. Do not desire the silver or gold that is on them, and do not take it for yourselves. If you do, that will be fatal, because the LORD hates idolatry.

Deu 7:26 Do not bring any of these idols into your homes, or the same curse will be on you that is on them. You must hate and despise these idols, because they are under the LORD's curse.

Deuteronomy 7:1-26

Deuteronomy 7 - Commands to Conquer and Obey

A. The Conquest of the Canaanites is commanded.

1. (1-5) The command to completely destroy the Canaanites and their culture.

When the LORD your God brings you into the land which you go to possess, and has cast out many nations before you, the Hittites and the Girgashites and the Amorites and the Canaanites and the Perizzites and the Hivites and the Jebusites, seven nations greater and mightier than you, and when the LORD your God delivers them over to you, you shall conquer them *and* utterly destroy them. You shall make no covenant with them nor show mercy to them. Nor shall you make marriages with them. You shall not give your daughter to their son, nor take their daughter for your son. For they will turn your sons away from following Me, to serve other gods; so the anger of the LORD will be aroused against you and destroy you suddenly. But thus you shall deal with them: you shall destroy their altars, and break down their *sacred* pillars, and cut down their wooden images, and burn their carved images with fire.

- a. **When the LORD your God:** Israel wasn't in the land yet, but Moses still instructed them as if it were a certainty. This was based on the faithful promise of God, but it was also according to His principle of *preparation*. God prepares us before He brings us into a place.
- b. **Greater and mightier than you:** "Sure," Moses said, "the Canaanite nations are **greater and mightier than you**. But they are not **greater and mightier** than God." God brought Israel to face a challenge that was impossible in their own strength - but entirely possible in Him.
- c. **When the LORD your God delivers them over to you:** Not "if," but **when**. God could be counted on.
- d. **You shall conquer them and utterly destroy them:** Yet, God would not do it all for them. The extent of the work would depend on their faithful response to what God would do.
 - i. **Utterly destroy them... nor show mercy to them:** This principle of battle until absolute victory is the key to victory as we take the Promised Land of blessing and peace God has for us in Jesus. We show no mercy to our enemies in the land, but we destroy them utterly. Many of us, truth be told, simply do not want to completely destroy the sins which keep us from God's Promised Land of blessing and peace - we want to weaken them, and have some control over them, but we do not want to **utterly destroy them**.
- e. **Destroy their altars, and break down their sacred pillars, and cut down their wooden images, and burn their carved images:** We are specially to destroy anything which would lead us into a false or foreign worship.

- i. This radical, complete destruction was important because of the depraved nature of the worship of the Canaanites, who worshipped male and female gods of sex and who practiced human sacrifice with their own children.
- 2. (6-8) *Conquer them completely because the LORD loves you.*
For you are a holy people to the LORD your God; the LORD your God has chosen you to be a people for Himself, a special treasure above all the peoples on the face of the earth. The LORD did not set His love on you nor choose you because you were more in number than any other people, for you were the least of all peoples; but because the LORD loves you, and because He would keep the oath which He swore to your fathers, the LORD has brought you out with a mighty hand, and redeemed you from the house of bondage, from the hand of Pharaoh king of Egypt.
 - a. **For you are a holy people to the LORD your God:** Israel was holy in their *standing* before God before they were holy in their *conduct*. They were set apart unto God by His choosing (**God has chosen you to be a people for Himself**) and were *then* called to live as chosen people.
 - b. **The LORD did not set His love on you nor choose you because you were more in number:** As much as anything, their election meant the LORD **set His love on** them. Their motivation for such a total obedience was to be that they knew God loved them.
 - i. This is the great motivation for obedience: knowing and walking in the love of God. When we really believe God loves us, and live with that belief as a conscious fact, we find it so much easier to obey - and

to utterly destroy anything that would damage that relationship of love.

3. (9-11) *Conquer them completely because you serve a God of justice.*

Therefore know that the LORD your God, He is God, the faithful God who keeps covenant and mercy for a thousand generations with those who love Him and keep His commandments; and He repays those who hate Him to their face, to destroy them. He will not be slack with him who hates Him; He will repay him to his face. Therefore you shall keep the commandment, the statutes, and the judgments which I command you today, to observe them.

a. **He repays those who hate Him to their face:** Over many generations the Canaanites had demonstrated their hatred for God, Now, using Israel as His instrument, God will repay them with judgment.

B. Blessing on an obedient Israel.

1. (12-16) *Abundant blessings for obedience.*

Then it shall come to pass, because you listen to these judgments, and keep and do them, that the LORD your God will keep with you the covenant and the mercy which He swore to your fathers. And He will love you and bless you and multiply you; He will also bless the fruit of your womb and the fruit of your land, your grain and your new wine and your oil, the increase of your cattle and the offspring of your flock, in the land of which He swore to your fathers to give you. You shall be blessed above all peoples; there shall not be a male or female barren among you or among your livestock. And the LORD will take away from you all sickness, and will afflict you with none of the terrible diseases of Egypt which you have known,

but will lay *them* on all those who hate you. And you shall destroy all the peoples whom the LORD your God delivers over to you; your eye shall have no pity on them; nor shall you serve their gods, for that *will* be a snare to you.

2. (17-24) *Have confidence in God's strength.*

If you should say in your heart, "These nations are greater than I; how can I dispossess them?"— you shall not be afraid of them, *but* you shall remember well what the LORD your God did to Pharaoh and to all Egypt: the great trials which your eyes saw, the signs and the wonders, the mighty hand and the outstretched arm, by which the LORD your God brought you out. So shall the LORD your God do to all the peoples of whom you are afraid. Moreover the LORD your God will send the hornet among them until those who are left, who hide themselves from you, are destroyed. You shall not be terrified of them; for the LORD your God, the great and awesome God, *is* among you. And the LORD your God will drive out those nations before you little by little; you will be unable to destroy them at once, lest the beasts of the field become *too* numerous for you. But the LORD your God will deliver them over to you, and will inflict defeat upon them until they are destroyed. And He will deliver their kings into your hand, and you will destroy their name from under heaven; no one shall be able to stand against you until you have destroyed them.

a. **You shall not be afraid of them, but you shall remember well what the LORD your God did:** Their recollection of God's faithfulness in the past would give them hope for their current struggle.

- b. **You will be unable to destroy them at once:** God would go before Israel and fight for them (**the great and awesome God, is among you**) but He would not drive all the enemies out at once. Perhaps Israel wanted the land all cleared out before them, but God knew it was not best for the land or for them.
- c. **Lest the beast of the field become too numerous for you:** The way easiest for Israel was for God to clear all Israel's enemies out at once. But this easy way had consequences Israel could not see or appreciate.
- d. **Little by little:** Sometimes to our frustration, this is the way God often works in our life. He clears things away little by little even though we might prefer it all at once. But God wanted Israel to grow spiritually in the process of taking the Promised Land.
 - i. Doing it all at once might seem easier and better to us but will have consequences we cannot see or appreciate. God cares that we grow, and so He grows us **little by little**.

3. (25-26) *Do not share in their abominations.*

You shall burn the carved images of their gods with fire; you shall not covet the silver or gold *that is* on them, nor take *it* for yourselves, lest you be snared by it; for *it is* an abomination to the LORD your God. Nor shall you bring an abomination into your house, lest you be doomed to destruction like it. You shall utterly detest it and utterly abhor it, for *it is* an accursed thing.

Remember the Lord Your God

Deu 8:1 "Obey faithfully all the laws that I have given you today, so that you may live, increase in number, and occupy the land that the LORD promised to your ancestors.

Deu 8:2 Remember how the LORD your God led you on this long journey through the desert these past forty years, sending hardships to test you, so that he might know what you intended to do and whether you would obey his commands.

Deu 8:3 He made you go hungry, and then he gave you manna to eat, food that you and your ancestors had never eaten before. He did this to teach you that you must not depend on bread alone to sustain you, but on everything that the LORD says.

Deu 8:4 During these forty years your clothes have not worn out, nor have your feet swollen up.

Deu 8:5 Remember that the LORD your God corrects and punishes you just as parents discipline their children.

Deu 8:6 So then, do as the LORD has commanded you: live according to his laws and obey him.

Deu 8:7 The LORD your God is bringing you into a fertile land—a land that has rivers and springs, and underground streams gushing out into the valleys and hills;

Deu 8:8 a land that produces wheat and barley, grapes, figs, pomegranates, olives, and honey.

Deu 8:9 There you will never go hungry or ever be in need. Its rocks have iron in them, and from its hills you can mine copper.

Deu 8:10 You will have all you want to eat, and you will give thanks to the LORD your God for the fertile land that he has given you.

Deu 8:11 "Make certain that you do not forget the LORD your God; do not fail to obey any of his laws that I am giving you today.

Deu 8:12 When you have all you want to eat and have built good houses to live in

Deu 8:13 and when your cattle and sheep, your silver and gold, and all your other possessions have increased,

Deu 8:14 be sure that you do not become proud and forget the LORD your God who rescued you from Egypt, where you were slaves.

Deu 8:15 He led you through that vast and terrifying desert where there were poisonous snakes and scorpions. In that dry and waterless land he made water flow out of solid rock for you.

Deu 8:16 In the desert he gave you manna to eat, food that your ancestors had never eaten. He sent hardships on you to test you, so that in the end he could bless you with good things.

Deu 8:17 So then, you must never think that you have made yourselves wealthy by your own power and strength.

Deu 8:18 Remember that it is the LORD your God who gives you the power to become rich. He does this because he is still faithful today to the covenant that he made with your ancestors.

Deu 8:19 Never forget the LORD your God or turn to other gods to worship and serve them. If you do, then I warn you today that you will certainly be destroyed.

Deu 8:20 If you do not obey the LORD, then you will be destroyed just like those nations that he is going to destroy as you advance.

Deuteronomy 8:1-20

Deuteronomy 8 - A Warning Against Pride

A. God's work of building humility in Israel during the wilderness wanderings.

1. (1-2) God humbled and tested Israel.

Every commandment which I command you today you must be careful to observe, that you may live and multiply, and go in and possess the land of which the LORD swore to your fathers. And you shall remember

that the LORD your God led you all the way these forty years in the wilderness, to humble you *and* test you, to know what was in your heart, whether you would keep His commandments or not.

- a. **Every command... you must be careful to observe:** God called Israel to a complete obedience. This obedience was to be based on remembering what the LORD had done among them in the wilderness.
- b. **To humble you:** God *humbled* Israel. He brought them to a place where all they could do was depend on Him. They had nothing else, and no one else to count on.
 - i. Some think that God's work of humbling is accomplished just by bringing us into a humble place. But it is where our heart is while we are in the humble place that God is really concerned about. We may be in a humble place but longing for something different. We may believe that God owes something different to us, and we will soon get it. Instead, God wants us to be content in the humble place He puts us.
- c. **And test you:** God *tested* Israel. It was not because He didn't know their hearts, but because *they* didn't know their hearts. We have to constantly be corrected of our over-estimation of ourselves.

2. (3-5) *God's education of Israel in the wilderness.*

So He humbled you, allowed you to hunger, and fed you with manna which you did not know nor did your fathers know, that He might make you know that man shall not live by bread alone; but man lives by every word that proceeds from the mouth of the LORD. Your garments did not wear out on you, nor did your foot swell these forty years. You should know in your

heart that as a man chastens his son, so the LORD your God chastens you.

- a. **So He humbled you:** All of God's education begins here. Some never even make it past this first essential step. If we are not humble and not teachable, there is then no point to the rest of any of God's education.
- b. **Allowed you to hunger, and fed you manna:** The next grade of God's education is *total dependence* on the LORD. Israel had to rely on God beyond their own knowledge (**which you did not know**), and beyond their own ability.
- c. **That He might make you know that man shall not live by bread alone:** In the negative, this was the lesson God wanted them to learn. In the positive, they had to learn that **man lives by every word that proceeds from the mouth of the LORD**. Sadly, many still live by **bread alone**, living only for material things, for what can be bought or sold or earned or possessed materially.
 - i. This statement is a command; but it is also a simple statement of fact: **man shall not live by bread alone**. You may exist by material things alone, but you will not live. Anyone thinking they live for bread alone is actually one of the living dead.
 - ii. Some don't **live** by God's word because they *fight* with God's word: "The worst implement with which you can knock a man down, is the Bible; it is intended for us to live upon, - not to be the weapon of our controversies, but our daily food, upon which we rejoice to live." (Spurgeon)
 - iii. We live by every **word** that proceeds from the mouth of God, not by every feeling we experience. "You have never received spiritual life by your own

feelings. It was when you believed God's Word that you lived; and you will never get an increase of spiritual life, and grow in grace, by your own feelings or your own doings. It must still be by your believing the promises and feeding on the Word." (Spurgeon)

iv. It is the word of God that is our food and substance, and not our own dreams or imaginations. If you are more excited about some dream or vision than you are about God's word, then something is wrong. *The prophet who has a dream, let him tell a dream; And he who has My word, let him speak My word faithfully. What is the chaff to the wheat?" says the LORD.* (Jer 23:28)

v. We live by **every** word: "In places where they cut diamonds, they sweep up the dust, because the very dust of diamonds is valuable; and in the Word of God, all the truth is so precious that the very tiniest truth, if there be such a thing, is still diamond dust, and is unspeakably precious." (Spurgeon)

vi. Find life in every word that proceeds from the mouth of the LORD! "Oh, keep to the Word, my brothers! Keep to it as God's Word, and as coming out of his mouth. Suck it down into your soul; you cannot have too much of it. Feed on it day and night, for thus will God make you to live the life that is life indeed." (Spurgeon)

3. (6-10) *Blessings in the land for Israel.*

Therefore you shall keep the commandments of the LORD your God, to walk in His ways and to fear Him. For the LORD your God is bringing you into a good land, a land of brooks of water, of fountains and springs, that flow out of valleys and hills; a land of wheat and barley, of vines and fig trees and pomegranates, a land of olive oil and honey; a land in which you will eat bread without scarcity, in which you will lack nothing; a land whose stones are iron and out of whose hills you can dig copper. When you have eaten and are full, then you shall bless the LORD your God for the good land which He has given you.

a. **Therefore you shall keep the commandments of the LORD your God:** If Israel would put their focus on every word that proceeds from the mouth of the LORD, then the LORD would take care of all the material things - and bring them into a materially abundant land.

i. God is not against material things - except when they come between Him and us. God wanted to materially bless a spiritually obedient Israel.

ii. "The reference to *iron* and *copper* in the hills is remarkably exact. Ancient copper mines and smelters have been discovered in recent years in the Arabah below the Dead Sea, and geological survey has demonstrated the presence of ores of copper and iron in the nearby hills." (Thompson)

b. **Then you shall bless the LORD your God for the good land which He has given you:** This is the simple principle of Mat 6:33 - *But seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness, and all these things shall be added to you.*

B. A warning against pride.

1. (11-17) *The danger of pride in the blessed life.*

Beware that you do not forget the LORD your God by not keeping His commandments, His judgments, and His statutes which I command you today, lest; when you have eaten and are full, and have built beautiful houses and dwell *in them*; and when your herds and your flocks multiply, and your silver and your gold are multiplied, and all that you have is multiplied; when your heart is lifted up, and you forget the LORD your God who brought you out of the land of Egypt, from the house of bondage; who led you through that great and terrible wilderness, *in which were* fiery serpents and scorpions and thirsty land where there was no

water; who brought water for you out of the flinty rock; who fed you in the wilderness with manna, which your fathers did not know, that He might humble you and that He might test you, to do you good in the end; then you say in your heart, "My power and the might of my hand have gained me this wealth."

- a. **Beware that you do not forget the LORD your God by not keeping His commandments:** When everything is fine and our lives are filled with abundance, it is not hard to have our hearts lifted up. We can easily forget the LORD Himself and forget it was all His work on our behalf.
- b. **My power and the might of my hand have gained me this wealth:** This is rarely said with the *lips*; it is said instead in the *heart*. It is easier to say "God did it" or "It's all the blessing of the LORD" than it is to really *mean* these words in the heart.

2. (18) *The correcting principle against pride in the blessed life.*

And you shall remember the LORD your God, for *it is* He who gives you power to get wealth, that He may establish His covenant which He swore to your fathers, as *it is* this day.

- a. **Remember the LORD your God:** In times of abundance, it is easy to forget the LORD, or to at least no longer seek Him with the urgency we once had.
- b. **It is He who gives you power to get wealth:** We often think highly of our own hard work and brilliance. Yet we must see that God gives us the body, the brain, and the talent. It is all of God.
- c. **That He may establish His covenant:** This reminds us *why* God has blessed us. His plan is that it would

ultimately further *His* eternal purpose. Therefore, we have no right to use our material blessing to further selfish purposes; instead, we use our resources to advance His kingdom.

3. (19-20) *The penalty of pride in the blessed life.*

Then it shall be, if you by any means forget the LORD your God, and follow other gods, and serve them and worship them, I testify against you this day that you shall surely perish. As the nations which the LORD destroys before you, so you shall perish, because you would not be obedient to the voice of the LORD your God.

a. **I testify against you this day that you shall surely perish:** Moses loved Israel, but he loved God more. Without hesitation, he would take the witness stand against a disobedient, proud Israel - and warn them before God that they will **surely perish** because of their pride and disobedience.

b. **As the nations which the LORD destroys before you, so shall you perish:** Israel would be tempted to look at the nations being judged in front of them, and to think, "We're better than them, so we are safe. God would never deal with us that way." But God would deal with them that way if they rose up in pride against Him.

c. **So you shall perish:** Pride is the greatest danger in the Christian life. It is the most Satanic of sins because it was by pride that Satan himself fell. Satan prizes a proud believer over the most notorious sinner, because he looks at the proud believer and says, "Now

there's a man just like me!"

i. Pride of *face* is obnoxious; pride of *race* is vulgar; but the worst pride is the pride of *grace*.

Not Because of Righteousness

Deu 9:1 "Listen, people of Israel! Today you are about to cross the Jordan River and occupy the land belonging to nations greater and more powerful than you. Their cities are large, with walls that reach the sky.

Deu 9:2 The people themselves are tall and strong; they are giants, and you have heard it said that no one can stand against them.

Deu 9:3 But now you will see for yourselves that the LORD your God will go ahead of you like a raging fire. He will defeat them as you advance, so that you will drive them out and destroy them quickly, as he promised.

Deu 9:4 "After the LORD your God has driven them out for you, do not say to yourselves that he brought you in to possess this land because you deserved it. No, the LORD is going to drive these people out for you because they are wicked.

Deu 9:5 It is not because you are good and do what is right that the LORD is letting you take their land. He will drive them out because they are wicked and because he intends to keep the promise that he made to your ancestors, Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob.

Deu 9:6 You can be sure that the LORD is not giving you this fertile land because you deserve it. No, you are a stubborn people.

Deu 9:7 "Never forget how you made the LORD your God angry in the desert. From the day that you left Egypt until the day you arrived here, you have rebelled against him.

Deu 9:8 Even at Mount Sinai you made the LORD angry—angry enough to destroy you.

Deu 9:9 I went up the mountain to receive the stone tablets on which was written the covenant that the LORD had made with you. I stayed there forty days and nights and did not eat or drink anything.

Deu 9:10 Then the LORD gave me the two stone tablets on which he had written with his own hand what he had said to you from the fire on the day that you were gathered there at the mountain.

Deu 9:11 Yes, after those forty days and nights the LORD gave me the two stone tablets on which he had written the covenant.

Deu 9:12 "Then the LORD said to me, 'Go down the mountain at once, because your people, whom you led out of Egypt, have become corrupt and have done evil. They have already turned away from what I commanded them to do, and they have made an idol for themselves.'

The Golden Calf

Deu 9:13 "The LORD also said to me, 'I know how stubborn these people are.'

Deu 9:14 Don't try to stop me. I intend to destroy them so that no one will remember them any longer. Then I will make you the father of a nation larger and more powerful than they are.'

Deu 9:15 "So I turned and went down the mountain, carrying the two stone tablets on which the covenant was written. Flames of fire were coming from the mountain.

Deu 9:16 I saw that you had already disobeyed the command that the LORD your God had given you, and that you had sinned against him by making yourselves a metal idol in the form of a bull-calf.

Deu 9:17 So there in front of you I threw the stone tablets down and broke them to pieces.

Deu 9:18 Then once again I lay face downward in the LORD's presence for forty days and nights and did not eat or drink anything. I did this because you had sinned against the LORD and had made him angry.

Deu 9:19 I was afraid of the LORD's fierce anger, because he was furious enough to destroy you; but once again the LORD listened to me.

Deu 9:20 The LORD was also angry enough with Aaron to kill him, so I prayed for Aaron at the same time.

Deu 9:21 I took that sinful thing that you had made—that metal bull-calf—and threw it into the fire. Then I broke it in pieces, ground it to dust, and threw the dust into the stream that flowed down the mountain.

Deu 9:22 "You also made the LORD your God angry when you were at Taberah, Massah, and Kibroth Hattaavah.

Deu 9:23 And when he sent you from Kadesh Barnea with orders to go and take possession of the land that he was giving you, you rebelled against him; you did not trust him or obey him.

Deu 9:24 Ever since I have known you, you have rebelled against the LORD.

Deu 9:25 "So I lay face downward in the LORD's presence those forty days and nights, because I knew that he was determined to destroy you.

Deu 9:26 And I prayed, 'Sovereign LORD, don't destroy your own people, the people you rescued and brought out of Egypt by your great strength and power.'

Deu 9:27 Remember your servants, Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, and do not pay any attention to the stubbornness, wickedness, and sin of this people.

Deu 9:28 Otherwise, the Egyptians will say that you were unable to take your people into the land that you had promised them. They will say that you took your people out into the desert to kill them, because you hated them.

Deu 9:29 After all, these are the people whom you chose to be your own and whom you brought out of Egypt by your great power and might.'

Deuteronomy 9:1-29

Deuteronomy 9 - The Battles Ahead and the Failures Behind

A. Considering the battles ahead.

1. (1-2) The difficulty of the battles ahead.

Hear, O Israel: You are to cross over the Jordan today, and go in to dispossess nations greater and mightier than yourself, cities great and fortified up to heaven, a people great and tall, the descendants of the Anakim, whom you know, and of whom you heard it said, "Who can stand before the descendants of Anak?"

a. **Go in to dispossess nations greater and mightier than yourself:** God was leading Israel into something too big for them. It was a challenge they could only meet if they trusted in God.

b. **Cities great and fortified up to heaven:** The cities they would battle against were mighty and the people they would battle against were **great and tall**. Yet God had called them to enter into this seemingly impossible battle.

i. There was no way Israel could do this in the flesh, or on their strength. God commanded them to do something that was just beyond their ability to do in themselves.

ii. Obviously, God did not inspire Israel with a false sense of confidence or hype. He wanted them to realistically know what the battle ahead would be like.

iii. In the same way, Jesus never calls us with hype or false promises that would lead to false confidence. He plainly says, *If anyone desires to come after Me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow*

Me. (Mat 16:24) Jesus let us know right from the beginning that following Him would require giving God everything.

2. (3) *Why victory is possible with the difficult battles ahead.*

Therefore understand today that the LORD your God is He who goes over before you as a consuming fire. He will destroy them and bring them down before you; so you shall drive them out and destroy them quickly, as the LORD has said to you.

a. **Understand today:** Just as much as Israel had to understand the impossibility of the battle on their own, they also must understand the *certainty* of victory in the LORD.

b. **The LORD your God is He who goes before you as a consuming fire. He will destroy them:** It was a battle too big for Israel, but not too big for the LORD. Israel could know both facts: That in themselves, the job was impossible (*without Me you can do nothing*, Joh 15:5), but in God the battle could *not* be lost (*I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me*, Philippians 4:13).

c. **He will destroy them:** God was also calling Israel to a *partnership* in winning the battles. **He will destroy them** does not contradict **you shall quickly drive them out and destroy them quickly**. Was God going to do it, or was Israel going to do it? Both, really - God was calling Israel to be *workers together with Him* (2Co 6:1).

d. **Destroy them quickly:** God did not want the Israelites to show mercy to the Canaanites. He wanted Israel to be a unique army of judgment against the Canaanites and their culture, which was so depraved that it deserved this kind of judgment.

i. Archaeologist William F. Albright, in his book *From the Stone Age to Christianity*, describes what the primary focus of Canaanite religion was: sex. The featured idols recovered by archaeologists are hundreds of nude female forms in sexually suggestive forms, as well as male idols associated with homosexual cults (*From the Stone Age to Christianity*, pages 232-235).

ii. "Thus the Canaanites, with their orgiastic nature-worship, their cult of fertility in the form of serpent symbols and sensuous nudity, and their gross mythology, were replaced by Israel." (Albright, page 281).

3. (4-6) *The danger of pride when the LORD gives them victory.*

Do not think in your heart, after the LORD your God has cast them out before you, saying, "Because of my righteousness the LORD has brought me in to possess this land"; but it is because of the wickedness of these nations that the LORD is driving them out from before you. It is not because of your righteousness or the uprightness of your heart that you go in to possess their land, but because of the wickedness of these nations that the LORD your God drives them out from before you, and that He may fulfill the word which the LORD swore to your fathers, to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. Therefore understand that the LORD your God is not giving you this good land to possess because of your righteousness, for you are a stiff-necked people.

a. **Do not think in your heart:** Israel's temptation to pride did not come in something they would actually say. Long before we will say proud words we think proud thoughts in our heart. Therefore, Israel must not think in

their heart that it was because of their **righteousness** that the LORD has given them the land.

- i. This is a preview of salvation by grace through faith, in which we cannot think that it is our righteousness that has obtained it. Instead, it is the righteousness we have received in Jesus Christ.
- ii. When we receive any gift from God, we are tempted to take it and use it to glorify ourselves. Israel must not do this in regard to the gift of the Promised Land, and we must not do it in regard to any gift the LORD would give us.
- iii. Sayings or proverbs of the ancient world reflect man's desire to *earn* his own righteousness and justification before God. "I will not have heaven for nothing" said one, and another said, "Give me heaven, for Thou owe it to me." The same idea is expressed in an old Roman Catholic teaching that dying men should pray, "LORD, join my righteousness with Christ's righteousness" as if the two together could accomplish something. Instead, we look to the righteousness of Jesus alone.

b. **For you are a stiff-necked people:** The idea is that Israel, like a rebellious domestic animal, would stiffen its neck against the yoke God would put upon it. They would not submit to God's direction in their life.

- i. **Stiff-necked** "is a figurative expression for stubborn, intractable, obdurate, and hardheaded." (Kalland)

B. The stiff-necked character of Israel is demonstrated in their past failures.

1. (7) *A call to remember their past rebellions.*

Remember! Do not forget how you provoked the LORD your God to wrath in the wilderness. From the

day that you departed from the land of Egypt until you came to this place, you have been rebellious against the LORD.

a. **Remember and do not forget:** God's purpose in reminding Israel of their rebellions against Him was not to discourage them or to make them feel defeated. The purpose was so that they would recognize their own weakness and trust in Him.

b. **You have been rebellious against the LORD:** The same idea is communicated in the New Testament at 1Co 10:12 : *therefore let him who thinks he stands take heed lest he fall.* When we remember our sinful nature, we walk in the poverty of spirit Jesus said was essential to a life of blessing (Mat 5:3).

2. (8-21) Remembering the rebellion at Mount Horeb.

Also in Horeb you provoked the LORD to wrath, so that the LORD was angry enough with you to have destroyed you. When I went up into the mountain to receive the tablets of stone, the tablets of the covenant which the LORD made with you, then I stayed on the mountain forty days and forty nights. I neither ate bread nor drank water. Then the LORD delivered to me two tablets of stone written with the finger of God, and on them were all the words which the LORD had spoken to you on the mountain from the midst of the fire in the day of the assembly. And it came to pass, at the end of forty days and forty nights, that the LORD gave me the two tablets of stone, the tablets of the covenant. Then the LORD said to me, "Arise, go down quickly from here, for your people whom you brought out of Egypt have acted corruptly; they have quickly turned aside from the way which I commanded them; they have made themselves a molded image." Furthermore the LORD

spoke to me, saying, "I have seen this people, and indeed they are a stiff-necked people. Let Me alone, that I may destroy them and blot out their name from under heaven; and I will make of you a nation mightier and greater than they." So I turned and came down from the mountain, and the mountain burned with fire; and the two tablets of the covenant were in my two hands. And I looked, and behold, you had sinned against the LORD your God; had made for yourselves a molded calf! You had turned aside quickly from the way which the LORD had commanded you. Then I took the two tablets and threw them out of my two hands and broke them before your eyes. And I fell down before the LORD, as at the first, forty days and forty nights; I neither ate bread nor drank water, because of all your sin which you committed in doing wickedly in the sight of the LORD, to provoke Him to anger. For I was afraid of the anger and hot displeasure with which the LORD was angry with you, to destroy you. But the LORD listened to me at that time also. And the LORD was very angry with Aaron *and* would have destroyed him; so I prayed for Aaron also at the same time. Then I took your sin, the calf which you had made, and burned it with fire and crushed it *and* ground it very small, until it was as fine as dust; and I threw its dust into the brook that descended from the mountain.

a. Also in Horeb you provoked the LORD to wrath:

This recalls the events at Mount Sinai, where Israel worshipped a golden calf when Moses was gone a long time on Mount Sinai, receiving the law from the LORD (Exodus 19-32).

b. Written with the finger of God: The original tablets of the law Moses received on Mount Sinai were actually

written by God Himself and contained the Ten Commandments (**all the words which the LORD had spoken to you on the mount from the midst of the fire in the day of the assembly**, found in Exodus 20).

c. **I will make of you a nation mightier and greater than they:** God told Moses of His desire to wipe out Israel in judgment, and to start over again with a new nation, descended from Moses himself.

d. **The mountain burned with fire:** The burning fires on Mount Sinai were physical representations of the glory of God and His holy presence. The mountain began to burn when Israel first came to Mount Sinai (

Exo 19:18). Those fires had burned for 40 straight days, and they burned *at the very time* Israel made a golden calf and began to worship it.

e. **I took the two tablets and threw them out of my two hands and broke them before your eyes:** Moses broke the tablets, "Not by an unbridled passion, but in zeal for God's honour, and by direction of God's Spirit, to signify to the people, that the covenant between God and them contained in those tables was broken and made void, and they were now quite cast out of God's favor, and could expect nothing from him but fiery indignation and severe justice." (Poole)

f. **For I was afraid:** The Hebrew word here is a rare word, translated in the Septuagint by the strong word *ekphobos*, which means "exceedingly frightened" or "stricken with terror." When he saw the sin of Israel and knew the holiness of God, Moses was very afraid for the sake of the people of Israel.

g. **I prayed for Aaron also:** Aaron's sin, detailed in Exodus 32, was so bad, that he surely would have been destroyed by the LORD - except Moses prayed for him.

This shows both the prevailing power of Moses' prayer and the great love in the heart of Moses.

h. **Burned it with fire and crushed it and ground it very small:** Moses burnt the idol, ground it up, and sprinkled it in the people's drinking water for three reasons.

- To show this god was nothing and could be destroyed easily.
- To completely obliterate this idol.
- To make the people pay an immediate consequence of their sin.

3. (22-24) *Parenthesis: remembering the rebellions at Taberah, Massah, Kibroth Hattaavah, and Kadesh Barnea.*

Also at Taberah and Massah and Kibroth Hattaavah you provoked the LORD to wrath. Likewise, when the LORD sent you from Kadesh Barnea, saying, "Go up and possess the land which I have given you," then you rebelled against the commandment of the LORD your God, and you did not believe Him nor obey His voice. You have been rebellious against the LORD from the day that I knew you.

a. **Also at Taberah:** The name **Taberah** means "burning," and in Numbers 11, when the people of Israel first left Mount Sinai to head towards Kadesh Barnea and the Promised Land, they immediately complained, and God sent fires of judgment against them at a place they called **Taberah** because of the burning fires of God's judgment.

b. **And Massah:** Exo 17:7 describes the naming of a place called **Massah**, which means "tempted," because there Israel provoked the LORD by doubting His loving care and concern for them in the wilderness.

c. **Kibroth Hattaavah:** The name means “graves of craving” and was the place where Israel longed for meat instead of manna, and God gave them meat. However, it became plagued in the mouths of those with greedy and discontent hearts (described in Numbers 11).

d. **When the LORD sent you from Kadesh Barnea:** Moses briefly remembered the rebellion at **Kadesh Barnea**, where Israel doubted God’s love for them and refused to enter the Promised Land by faith - rebelling against the LORD (Numbers 13-14).

e. **You did not believe Him nor obey His voice:** Israel’s disobedience to God began with their unbelief. They did not believe God loved them and was mighty enough to bring them into the Promised Land.

4. (25-29) *Moses’ prayer of intercession for Israel when they rebelled at Mount Horeb.*

Thus I prostrated myself before the LORD; forty days and forty nights I kept prostrating myself, because the LORD had said He would destroy you. Therefore I prayed to the LORD, and said: “O Lord GOD, do not destroy Your people and Your inheritance whom You have redeemed through Your greatness, whom You have brought out of Egypt with a mighty hand. Remember Your servants, Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob; do not look on the stubbornness of this people, or on their wickedness or their sin, lest the land from which You brought us should say, ‘Because the LORD was not able to bring them to the land which He promised them, and because He hated them, He has brought them out to kill them in the wilderness.’ Yet they are Your people and Your inheritance, whom You brought out by Your mighty power and by Your outstretched arm.”

- a. **Therefore I prayed to the LORD:** This great prayer of intercession from Moses is described more fully in Exodus 32. Moses asked for mercy upon Israel because of God's past faithfulness to them (**whom You have redeemed**).
- b. **Remember Your servants Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob:** Moses asked for mercy upon Israel because of God's past faithfulness to the patriarchs.
- c. **Lest the land from which You brought us should say, "Because the LORD was not able":** Moses asked for mercy upon Israel because of concern for the glory of God's own name and His reputation among the nations.
- d. **Your people... Your inheritance... You brought out... Your mighty power... Your outstretched arm:** Moses asked for mercy upon Israel because they were God's people.
 - i. We can seek the mercy and power of God through prayer by praying with the same heart and by pleading the same reasons before the LORD. Prayer on solid reasons like these is far more effective than merely casting wishes up towards heaven.
 - Because of God's past faithfulness to us.
 - Because of His past faithfulness to our forefathers.
 - Because of His own glory and reputation among the nations.
 - Because we are His people.
 - ii. Keeping these things in mind is also a way to refine our prayers. When we pray only for the things consistent with God's glory, we have our hearts set on the right things.

New Tablets of Stone

Deu 10:1 "Then the LORD said to me, 'Cut two stone tablets like the first ones and make a wooden Box to put them in. Come up to me on the mountain,

Deu 10:2 and I will write on those tablets what I wrote on the tablets that you broke, and then you are to put them in the Box.'

Deu 10:3 "So I made a Box of acacia wood and cut two stone tablets like the first ones and took them up the mountain.

Deu 10:4 Then the LORD wrote on those tablets the same words that he had written the first time, the Ten Commandments that he gave you when he spoke from the fire on the day you were gathered at the mountain. The LORD gave me the tablets,

Deu 10:5 and I turned and went down the mountain. Then, just as the LORD had commanded, I put them in the Box that I had made—and they have been there ever since."

Deu 10:6 (The Israelites set out from the wells that belonged to the people of Jaakan, and went to Moserah. There Aaron died and was buried, and his son Eleazar succeeded him as priest.

Deu 10:7 From there they went to Gudgodah and then on to Jotbathah, a well-watered place.

Deu 10:8 At the mountain the LORD appointed the men of the tribe of Levi to be in charge of the Covenant Box, to serve him as priests, and to pronounce blessings in his name. And these are still their duties.

Deu 10:9 That is why the tribe of Levi received no land as the other tribes did; what they received was the privilege of being the LORD's priests, as the LORD your God promised.)

Deu 10:10 "I stayed on the mountain forty days and nights, as I did the first time. The LORD listened to me once more and agreed not to destroy you.

Deu 10:11 Then he told me to go and lead you, so that you could take possession of the land that he had promised to give to your ancestors.

Circumcise Your Heart

Deu 10:12 "Now, people of Israel, listen to what the LORD your God demands of you: Worship the LORD and do all that he commands. Love him, serve him with all your heart,

Deu 10:13 and obey all his laws. I am giving them to you today for your benefit.

Deu 10:14 To the LORD belong even the highest heavens; the earth is his also, and everything on it.

Deu 10:15 But the LORD's love for your ancestors was so strong that he chose you instead of any other people, and you are still his chosen people.

Deu 10:16 So then, from now on be obedient to the LORD and stop being stubborn.

Deu 10:17 The LORD your God is supreme over all gods and over all powers. He is great and mighty, and he is to be obeyed. He does not show partiality, and he does not accept bribes.

Deu 10:18 He makes sure that orphans and widows are treated fairly; he loves the foreigners who live with our people, and gives them food and clothes.

Deu 10:19 So then, show love for those foreigners, because you were once foreigners in Egypt.

Deu 10:20 Have reverence for the LORD your God and worship only him. Be faithful to him and make your promises in his name alone.

Deu 10:21 Praise him—he is your God, and you have seen with your own eyes the great and astounding things that he has done for you.

Deu 10:22 When your ancestors went to Egypt, there were only seventy of them. But now the LORD your God has

made you as numerous as the stars in the sky.

Deuteronomy 10:1-22

Deuteronomy 10 - Recovering after a Fall

A. God's plan of recovery for Israel after the rebellion at Mount Sinai.

1. (1-5) Israel had to get back to the Word of God, so God commanded the giving of the new tablets of the law.

At that time the LORD said to me, “Hew for yourself two tablets of stone like the first, and come up to Me on the mountain and make yourself an ark of wood. And I will write on the tablets the words that were on the first tablets, which you broke; and you shall put them in the ark.” So I made an ark of acacia wood, hewed two tablets of stone like the first, and went up the mountain, having the two tablets in my hand. And He wrote on the tablets according to the first writing, the Ten Commandments, which the LORD had spoken to you in the mountain from the midst of the fire in the day of the assembly; and the LORD gave them to me. Then I turned and came down from the mountain, and put the tablets in the ark which I had made; and there they are, just as the LORD commanded me.

a. **Hew for yourself two tablets of stone like the first:** Moses broke the tablets of the law, not only out of anger, but also as a powerful visual representation of Israel's breaking of the law of God. Now God commanded that they restore the law by bringing forth two new tablets of the law.

b. **He wrote on the tablets according to the first writing:** God wanted His written word to be the starting point for Israel's right walk with Him. Therefore, He

restored the tablets, even writing on the second tablets with His own hand.

i. This is a powerful picture of the inspiration of God's word; though God did not literally write the Scriptures with His own hand, He did perfectly guide the minds and hands of the writers, so that the Scriptures are "God-breathed" (2Ti 3:16), that is, given by the inspiration of God.

c. **And put the tablets in the ark which I had made; and there they are:** Getting right with God after a time of rebellion must *always* begin and center on God's word. In the days of Josiah, King of Judah, repentance and revival came to the people of God when they focused on God's word again (2Ki 22:8 to 2Ki 23:25).

2. (6-9) *In order to deal with Israel's sin problem, God established an enduring priesthood.*

(Now the children of Israel journeyed from the wells of Bene Jaakan to Moserah, where Aaron died, and where he was buried; and Eleazar his son ministered as priest in his stead. From there they journeyed to Gudgodah, and from Gudgodah to Jotbathah, a land of rivers of water. At that time the LORD separated the tribe of Levi to bear the ark of the covenant of the LORD, to stand before the LORD to minister to Him and to bless in His name, to this day. Therefore Levi has no portion nor inheritance with his brethren; the LORD is his inheritance, just as the LORD your God promised him.)

a. **Where Aaron died, and where he was buried; and Eleazar his son ministered as priest in his stead:** This parenthesis speaking about the priesthood demonstrated the need for priestly sacrifice and intercession in getting right with God after a time of

rebellion. Israel needed the sacrifice, intercession, and blessing that the Levites would bring to the nation.

- i. The need for a priesthood shouted to Israel: "You can't do it on your own. You need to come to God through a mediator, who will atone for your sin, pray for you, and bless you. If you refuse your priestly mediator, and trust in your own ability to do these things, you will perish."
 - b. **To stand before the LORD to minister to Him and to bless in His name:** Getting right with God after a time of rebellion must *always* have a focus on the priestly ministry of Jesus on our behalf. This work of Jesus is shown in His atonement for our sin at the cross, on His intercession for us in heaven, and on the blessing that He brings to us from heaven.
3. (10-11) *Israel needed to move on towards the Promised Land, so God gave Moses the command to go forth.*
- As at the first time, I stayed in the mountain forty days and forty nights; the LORD also heard me at that time, and the LORD chose not to destroy you. Then the LORD said to me, "Arise, begin your journey before the people, that they may go in and possess the land which I swore to their fathers to give them."**
- a. **Arise, begin your journey:** Israel's rebellion at Mount Sinai with the golden calf was significant; it was no small matter. Yet God was not done with them. After they came back to His word and came through His priesthood, it was time to move on. God had a place to take them and they had to get about the business of getting there.
 - b. **That they may go in and possess the land:** Getting right with God after a time of rebellion must *always* come to a place of progress again. It does no

good to come back to the word, come through God's priesthood in Jesus, and then remain stuck in the same place. God wants us to move on with Him, and when we are walking right with God again, we will **go in and possess the land.**

B. What God requires of Israel.

1. (12-13) *What the LORD requires of His people.*

And now, Israel, what does the LORD your God require of you, but to fear the LORD your God, to walk in all His ways and to love Him, to serve the LORD your God with all your heart and with all your soul, and to keep the commandments of the LORD and His statutes which I command you today for your good?

- a. **Fear the LORD your God:** God requires from us a reverential honor towards Him; not a fear that would make us shrink back, but a heart that so honors God that we would be hesitant to offend Him.
- b. **To walk in all His ways:** God requires us to live our lives after the pattern He has set for us; to walk on His road not on our own.
- c. **To love Him:** God requires us to love Him. This means the love He expects isn't a love that just happens, but it is a love that comes from a decision to set our affection upon Him.
- d. **To serve the LORD your God with all your heart and with all your soul:** God requires us to serve Him, to see all that we do as service unto Him, and to do all that we do as if doing it unto Him.
- e. **To keep the commandments of the LORD and His statutes:** God requires us to not only know His word, but to *keep* it - in the sense of possessing it in ourselves, and in the sense of protecting it.

f. **For your good:** every command of God is given for our good. They are never given so He can exercise His power, or so He can feel important. Every command He makes is with our best interest in mind, even if we cannot sense it or understand it.

2. (14-15) *Why God requires this from Israel.*

Indeed heaven and the highest heavens belong to the LORD your God, also the earth with all that is in it. The LORD delighted only in your fathers, to love them; and He chose their descendants after them, you above all peoples, as it is this day.

a. **The LORD delighted only in your fathers, to love them:** God requires this conduct from His people because they are His special possession. Though heaven and earth belong to God, He set His focus and attention on Israel beginning with their fathers.

b. **You above all peoples, as it is this day:** Being chosen - having the special attention of God focused upon you - is a place of great privilege, but also a place of great responsibility. Israel had a special responsibility to obedience.

3. (16) *What it takes to fulfill what God requires.*

Therefore circumcise the foreskin of your heart, and be stiff-necked no longer.

a. **Therefore circumcise the foreskin of your heart:** All males among Israel had to be circumcised eight days after they were born. But this minor surgery was merely a symbol for the real work of cutting away the flesh that God desired; the work of taking our hearts inclined after the flesh and giving us hearts inclined after the spirit.

b. **And be stiff-necked no longer:** This theme would be repeated later in the prophets. *Circumcise yourselves to the LORD, and take away the foreskins of your hearts*

(Jer 4:4). To fulfill God's law, it takes more than being given a command - it takes an inner transformation, a transformation that only God can bring.

- i. God commanded them to do something that only He could do in them to show them the need to have the inner transformation, and to compel them to seek Him for this inner work.
- ii. Israel is said to have uncircumcised hearts in Lev 26:41, Jer 9:26, and Eze 44:7; Eze 44:9.

4. (17-22) *A call to obedience, reverence, and compassion.*

For the LORD your God is God of gods and Lord of lords, the great God, mighty and awesome, who shows no partiality nor takes a bribe. He administers justice for the fatherless and the widow, and loves the stranger, giving him food and clothing. Therefore love the stranger, for you were strangers in the land of Egypt. You shall fear the LORD your God; you shall serve Him, and to Him you shall hold fast, and take oaths in His name. He is your praise, and He is your God, who has done for you these great and awesome things which your eyes have seen. Your fathers went down to Egypt with seventy persons, and now the LORD your God has made you as the stars of heaven in multitude.

a. **The LORD your God is God of gods and LORD of lords, the great God, mighty and awesome:** The basis of this brief section of commands is set in the character of God.

b. **The great God, mighty and awesome:** When God requires us to show justice (**no partiality nor takes a bribe**), compassion (**loves the stranger**), and reverence (**take oaths in His name**), it is because these virtues answer to aspects in God's own character.

c. **Who has done for you these great and awesome things:** The obedience God calls us to is always set in the context of what He did for us. Our service and obedience unto the LORD is based on what He has done for us and is to be the grateful response to His goodness. If there is a lack in obedience and reverence, there is almost always a lack of appreciation for what the LORD has done.

d. **He is your praise:** This is true in two senses. First, He is the *object* of our praise; second, He is also the One who makes us

praiseworthy. Any wisdom, beauty, or skill we show is not to our praise - but **He is your praise**.

Love and Serve the Lord

Deu 11:1 "Love the LORD your God and always obey all his laws.

Deu 11:2 Remember today what you have learned about the LORD through your experiences with him. It was you, not your children, who had these experiences. You saw the LORD's greatness, his power, his might,

Deu 11:3 and his miracles. You saw what he did to the king of Egypt and to his entire country.

Deu 11:4 You saw how the LORD completely wiped out the Egyptian army, along with their horses and chariots, by drowning them in the Red Sea when they were pursuing you.

Deu 11:5 You know what the LORD did for you in the desert before you arrived here.

Deu 11:6 You recall what he did to Dathan and Abiram, the sons of Eliab of the tribe of Reuben. In the sight of everyone the earth opened up and swallowed them, along with their families, their tents, and all their servants and animals.

Deu 11:7 Yes, you are the ones who have seen all these great things that the LORD has done.

Deu 11:8 "Obey everything that I have commanded you today. Then you will be able to cross the river and occupy the land that you are about to enter.

Deu 11:9 And you will live a long time in the rich and fertile land that the LORD promised to give your ancestors and their descendants.

Deu 11:10 The land that you are about to occupy is not like the land of Egypt, where you lived before. There, when you planted grain, you had to work hard to irrigate the fields;

Deu 11:11 but the land that you are about to enter is a land of mountains and valleys, a land watered by rain.

Deu 11:12 The LORD your God takes care of this land and watches over it throughout the year.

Deu 11:13 "So then, obey the commands that I have given you today; love the LORD your God and serve him with all your heart.

Deu 11:14 If you do, he will send rain on your land when it is needed, in the autumn and in the spring, so that there will be grain, wine, and olive oil for you,

Deu 11:15 and grass for your livestock. You will have all the food you want.

Deu 11:16 Do not let yourselves be led away from the LORD to worship and serve other gods.

Deu 11:17 If you do, the LORD will become angry with you. He will hold back the rain, and your ground will become too dry for crops to grow. Then you will soon die there, even though it is a good land that he is giving you.

Deu 11:18 "Remember these commands and cherish them. Tie them on your arms and wear them on your foreheads as a reminder.

Deu 11:19 Teach them to your children. Talk about them when you are at home and when you are away, when you

are resting and when you are working.

Deu 11:20 Write them on the doorposts of your houses and on your gates.

Deu 11:21 Then you and your children will live a long time in the land that the LORD your God promised to give to your ancestors. You will live there as long as there is a sky above the earth.

Deu 11:22 "Obey faithfully everything that I have commanded you: Love the LORD your God, do everything he commands, and be faithful to him.

Deu 11:23 Then he will drive out all those nations as you advance, and you will occupy the land belonging to nations greater and more powerful than you.

Deu 11:24 All the ground that you march over will be yours. Your territory will extend from the desert in the south to the Lebanon Mountains in the north, and from the Euphrates River in the east to the Mediterranean Sea in the west.

Deu 11:25 Wherever you go in that land, the LORD your God will make the people fear you, as he has promised, and no one will be able to stop you.

Deu 11:26 "Today I am giving you the choice between a blessing and a curse—

Deu 11:27 a blessing, if you obey the commands of the LORD your God that I am giving you today;

Deu 11:28 but a curse, if you disobey these commands and turn away to worship other gods that you have never worshiped before.

Deu 11:29 When the LORD brings you into the land that you are going to occupy, you are to proclaim the blessing from Mount Gerizim and the curse from Mount Ebal.

Deu 11:30 (These two mountains are west of the Jordan River in the territory of the Canaanites who live in the

Jordan Valley. They are toward the west, not far from the sacred trees of Moreh near the town of Gilgal.)

Deu 11:31 You are about to cross the Jordan River and occupy the land that the LORD your God is giving you. When you take it and settle there,

Deu 11:32 be sure to obey all the laws that I am giving you today.

Deuteronomy 11:1-32

Deuteronomy 11 - Rewards for Obedience and the Choice

A. How to be blessed.

1. (1-7) *Remember the ways God has already blessed.*

Therefore you shall love the LORD your God, and keep His charge, His statutes, His judgments, and His commandments always. Know today that I do not speak with your children, who have not known and who have not seen the chastening of the LORD your God, His greatness and His mighty hand and His outstretched arm; His signs and His acts which He did in the midst of Egypt, to Pharaoh king of Egypt, and to all his land; what He did to the army of Egypt, to their horses and their chariots: how He made the waters of the Red Sea overflow them as they pursued you, and how the LORD has destroyed them to this day; what He did for you in the wilderness until you came to this place; and what He did to Dathan and Abiram the sons of Eliab, the son of Reuben: how the earth opened its mouth and swallowed them up, their households, their tents, and all the substance that was in their possession, in the midst of all Israel; but your eyes have seen every great act of the LORD which He did.

a. **Therefore you shall love the LORD your God:** God commanded Israel to love Him. Love is not a matter left entirely up to our impulse or our feelings. We choose to love the LORD or not.

i. Additionally, this reminds us of what the LORD really wants from us - our love. We could give Him a hundred other things, but none of it really matters unless we give Him our love. As Jesus said to the Ephesian church in Rev 2:4 : *Nevertheless I have this against you, that you have left your first love.* If we lose love, we lose all.

b. **And keep His charge, His statutes, His judgments, and His commandments:** Love for God never goes *against* His word. Some people think their so-called love for Jesus allows them to disregard His commands, but this isn't real love at all.

i. As Jesus said in Joh 14:15 : *If you love Me, keep My commandments.* Real love for Jesus always translates into obedience.

c. **Know today that I do not speak with your children, who have not known and who have not seen:** Moses addressed the generation which saw the works of God among Israel, both in blessing and chastening. He spoke to the generation that *should* know and remember.

d. **Dathan and Abiram:** These were the two key associates - perhaps the instigators - in the rebellion of Korah (Numbers 16), where God vindicated His servant Moses and leader over Israel, when Korah, Dathan, and Abiram challenged Moses' leadership.

e. **Which He did... what He did... how He made... how the LORD destroyed them... what He did for you... what He did... every great act of the LORD**

which He did: Moses called Israel to remember what God did in their history.

i. Most of history - both official and personal - is simply concerned with what *man* has done. But God wants us to look at history and see what *He did*. We learn far more, and are far more benefited, by looking at what God has done, rather than looking at what man has done.

2. (8-15) *Blessings in the new land.*

Therefore you shall keep every commandment which I command you today, that you may be strong, and go in and possess the land which you cross over to possess, and that you may prolong your days in the land which the LORD swore to give your fathers, to them and their descendants, "a land flowing with milk and honey." For the land which you go to possess *is not like the land of Egypt from which you have come, where you sowed your seed and watered it by foot, as a vegetable garden; but the land which you cross over to possess is a land of hills and valleys, which drinks water from the rain of heaven, a land for which the LORD your God cares; the eyes of the LORD your God are always on it, from the beginning of the year to the very end of the year.* "And it shall be that if you earnestly obey My commandments which I command you today, to love the LORD your God and serve Him with all your heart and with all your soul, then I will give you the rain for your land in its season, the early rain and the latter rain, that you may gather in your grain, your new wine, and your oil. And I will send grass in your fields for your livestock, that you may eat and be filled."

a. **Therefore you shall keep every commandment:** Remembering what God did in history should lead Israel

to greater obedience and enable them to take the Promised Land.

b. **A land flowing with milk and honey:** The sacrifices in obedience were well worth it for Israel. They had the promise of a land which was far superior to Egypt, which did not need to be artificially irrigated, but was watered by rains which God would send upon the obedient nation.

i. In calling Egypt a place where they **watered by foot**, it refers to the system of artificial irrigation, using foot-driven pumps to lift water from the Nile to nearby fields. Canaan was so rich it did not need this kind of irrigation.

c. **If you earnestly obey My commandments:** God simply promised to provide for Israel if they chose to obey Him and put Him first. As Jesus said: *seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness, and all these things shall be added to you* (Mat 6:33).

i. The promise of the blessing of rain was important, because one of the attractive of the Canaanite gods was *Baal* - the god who was said to control the weather and rain. Perhaps the Israelites would be tempted to think, "well, we are in Canaan, and if we want rain, we should worship the Canaanite god of rain." But the LORD makes it clear that if they would worship and obey Him, He would supply abundant rain.

d. **The early rain and the latter rain:** The **early rain** fell in October and November and was important to help soften the ground for plowing and preparing the soil for the seed. The **latter rain** fell about April, and helped the crops come to final harvest.

e. **A land for which the LORD your God cares; the eyes of the LORD your God are always on it, from**

the beginning of the year to the very end of the year: God declared His special care for the land of Israel, both then and now.

3. (16-17) *The danger of blessing: Turning from God in times of prosperity.*

Take heed to yourselves, lest your heart be deceived, and you turn aside and serve other gods and worship them, lest the LORD's anger be aroused against you, and He shut up the heavens so that there be no rain, and the land yield no produce, and you perish quickly from the good land which the LORD is giving you.

a. **Lest your heart be deceived:** God had to warn Israel against the deceptions of prosperity. The person who turns from God in prosperity is simply deceived. They believe they are somehow responsible for the blessings received and become proud and self-reliant.

b. **He shut up the heavens so that there be no rain:** Just such a judgment came upon Israel in the days of Ahab, the wicked king over Israel in the time Elijah was a prophet (1Ki 17:1).

i. The constant need for rain kept Israel in constant dependence on the LORD. It is good for us to have things that keep us in constant dependence on the LORD. We should never despise those things and long for the day when we will no longer need to depend on God as much.

4. (18-21) *Blessing is gained by keeping the Word of God always before you.*

Therefore you shall lay up these words of mine in your heart and in your soul, and bind them as a sign on your hand, and they shall be as frontlets between your eyes. You shall teach them to your children, speaking of them when you sit in your house, when

you walk by the way, when you lie down, and when you rise up. And you shall write them on the doorposts of your house and on your gates, that your days and the days of your children may be multiplied in the land of which the LORD swore to your fathers to give them, like the days of the heavens above the earth.

- a. **Lay up these words of mine in your heart and in your soul:** God called Israel to not only read the Word of God and to know the Word of God, but to *treasure* it. In the same way, we should love God's word and miss it when we are separated from the Word of God. We should call it to mind with longing, having laid it up in our heart and soul.
- b. **Speaking of them:** God's Word was to be the topic of their conversation. We can fairly measure our love for God's word by how much we will talk about it with others. God doesn't want us to have a secret love relationship with His word.

B. The Choice.

1. (22-25) The promise of blessing.

For if you carefully keep all these commandments which I command you to do; to love the LORD your God, to walk in all His ways, and to hold fast to Him; then the LORD will drive out all these nations from before you, and you will dispossess greater and mightier nations than yourselves. Every place on which the sole of your foot treads shall be yours: from the wilderness and Lebanon, from the river, the River Euphrates, even to the Western Sea, shall be your territory. No man shall be able to stand against you; the LORD your God will put the dread of you and the fear of you upon all the land where you tread, just as He has said to you.

- a. **To love the LORD your God, to walk in all His ways, and to hold fast to Him:** All the commandments are summarized in these three phrases. Each of these speaks of more than a bare and compelled obedience; they speak of a real relationship of love between God and His people, with obedience flowing naturally from that relationship.
- b. **The LORD will drive out... and you will dispossess greater and mightier nations:** God promised to fight the battles for an obedient Israel. Many desire God to fight their battles but have little interest in obeying Him - or cultivating the deep relationship of love which obedience grows from.
- c. **Every place on which the sole of your foot treads:** God repeated this promise to Joshua, just when Israel was about to cross over the Jordan River into Canaan (Jos 1:3).
- d. **No man shall be able to stand against you:** When Israel walked in love with the LORD and was obedient to Him, they were unbeatable. No man could defeat them. Greater was God who was with them than he who was in the world! (

1Jn 4:4)

2. (26-28) *The choice: Blessing or cursing?*

Behold, I set before you today a blessing and a curse: the blessing, if you obey the commandments of the LORD your God which I command you today; and the curse, if you do not obey the commandments of the LORD your God, but turn aside from the way which I command you today, to go after other gods which you have not known.

- a. **Behold, I set before you today a blessing and a curse:** The three great elements to the Old Covenant

were the law, the sacrifice, and the choice. Israel had a choice - to obey and be blessed, or to disobey and be cursed. It was a cause and effect relationship with God.

- i. It is important to recognize that we, in Jesus Christ, do not have an Old Covenant relationship with God. We expect to be blessed, not because of our obedience, but because of our position in Jesus. The curse we deserved was laid upon Him (Gal 3:10-14). Though there may be an inherent curse of consequences in our disobedience or even in the correcting hand of God, under the New Covenant, He does not punish us or curse us - because all that we deserved, past, present, and future, was poured out upon Jesus.
 - b. **I set before you today:** It was up to Israel. If they wanted to be blessed, then they should walk in obedience (as they were in the days of David and Solomon), but if they disobeyed, they would be cursed (as they were in most of the days of the later kings)
 - i. A choice was *required*. There was no neutral ground. God wouldn't just "leave them alone." It would either be blessing or cursing.
 - c. **To go after other gods which you have not known:** Inherent in Israel's disobedience was idolatry. Whenever we walk in disobedience, we exalt ourselves against God - and declaring that our rules, our standards, our desires, are all more important than His. This is idolatry in its most base - and common - form.
3. (29-32) *Making the choice known unto the people.*

Now it shall be, when the LORD your God has brought you into the land which you go to possess, that you shall put the blessing on Mount Gerizim and the curse on Mount Ebal. Are they not on the other side of the

Jordan, toward the setting sun, in the land of the Canaanites who dwell in the plain opposite Gilgal, beside the terebinth trees of Moreh? For you will cross over the Jordan and go in to possess the land which the LORD your God is giving you, and you will possess it and dwell in it. And you shall be careful to observe all the statutes and judgments which I set before you today.

- a. **You shall put the blessing on Mount Gerizim and the curse on Mount Ebal:** The recitation of the blessings on Mount Gerizim and the curse on Mount Ebal will be detailed in later chapters. Yet it is plain that God wanted the word to get to the entire nation, because the entire nation was part of this covenant with Him.
- b. **Mount Gerizim... Mount Ebal:** The name **Gerizim** is supposed to be associated with fruitful harvests, and the name **Ebal** is supposed to be associated with barrenness.

The Lord's Chosen Place of Worship

Deu 12:1 "Here are the laws that you are to obey as long as you live in the land that the LORD, the God of your ancestors, is giving you. Listen to them!"

Deu 12:2 In the land that you are taking, destroy all the places where the people worship their gods on high mountains, on hills, and under green trees.

Deu 12:3 Tear down their altars and smash their sacred stone pillars to pieces. Burn their symbols of the goddess Asherah and chop down their idols, so that they will never again be worshiped at those places.

Deu 12:4 "Do not worship the LORD your God in the way that these people worship their gods."

Deu 12:5 Out of the territory of all your tribes the LORD will choose the one place where the people are to come into his presence and worship him.

Deu 12:6 There you are to offer your sacrifices that are to be burned and your other sacrifices, your tithes and your offerings, the gifts that you promise to the LORD, your freewill offerings, and the first-born of your cattle and sheep.

Deu 12:7 There, in the presence of the LORD your God, who has blessed you, you and your families will eat and enjoy the good things that you have worked for.

Deu 12:8 "When that time comes, you must not do as you have been doing. Until now you have all been worshiping as you please,

Deu 12:9 because you have not yet entered the land that the LORD your God is giving you, where you can live in peace.

Deu 12:10 When you cross the Jordan River, the LORD will let you occupy the land and live there. He will keep you safe from all your enemies, and you will live in peace.

Deu 12:11 The LORD will choose a single place where he is to be worshiped, and there you must bring to him everything that I have commanded: your sacrifices that are to be burned and your other sacrifices, your tithes and your offerings, and those special gifts that you have promised to the LORD.

Deu 12:12 Be joyful there in his presence, together with your children, your servants, and the Levites who live in your towns; remember that the Levites will have no land of their own.

Deu 12:13 You are not to offer your sacrifices wherever you choose;

Deu 12:14 you must offer them only in the one place that the LORD will choose in the territory of one of your tribes. Only there are you to offer your sacrifices that are to be burned and do all the other things that I have commanded you.

Deu 12:15 "But you are free to kill and eat your animals wherever you live. You may eat as many as the LORD gives you. All of you, whether ritually clean or unclean, may eat them, just as you would eat the meat of deer or antelope.

Deu 12:16 But you must not eat their blood; you must pour it out on the ground like water.

Deu 12:17 Nothing that you offer to the LORD is to be eaten in the places where you live: neither the tithes of your grain, your wine, or your olive oil, nor the first-born of your cattle and sheep, the gifts that you promise to the LORD, your freewill offerings, or any other offerings.

Deu 12:18 You and your children, together with your servants and the Levites who live in your towns, are to eat these offerings only in the presence of the LORD your God, in the one place of worship chosen by the LORD your God. And you are to be happy there over everything that you have done.

Deu 12:19 Be sure, also, not to neglect the Levites, as long as you live in your land.

Deu 12:20 "When the LORD your God enlarges your territory, as he has promised, you may eat meat whenever you want to.

Deu 12:21 If the one place of worship is too far away, then, whenever you wish, you may kill any of the cattle or sheep that the LORD has given you, and you may eat the meat at home, as I have told you.

Deu 12:22 Anyone, ritually clean or unclean, may eat that meat, just as he would eat the meat of deer or antelope.

Deu 12:23 Only do not eat meat with blood still in it, for the life is in the blood, and you must not eat the life with the meat.

Deu 12:24 Do not use the blood for food; instead, pour it out on the ground like water.

Deu 12:25 If you obey this command, the LORD will be pleased, and all will go well for you and your descendants.

Deu 12:26 Take to the one place of worship your offerings and the gifts that you have promised the LORD.

Deu 12:27 Offer there the sacrifices which are to be completely burned on the LORD's altar. Also offer those sacrifices in which you eat the meat and pour the blood out on the altar.

Deu 12:28 Obey faithfully everything that I have commanded you, and all will go well for you and your descendants forever, because you will be doing what is right and what pleases the LORD your God.

Warning Against Idolatry

Deu 12:29 "The LORD your God will destroy the nations as you invade their land, and you will occupy it and settle there.

Deu 12:30 After the LORD destroys those nations, make sure that you don't follow their religious practices, because that would be fatal. Don't try to find out how they worship their gods, so that you can worship in the same way.

Deu 12:31 Do not worship the LORD your God in the way they worship their gods, for in the worship of their gods they do all the disgusting things that the LORD hates. They even sacrifice their children in the fires on their altars.

Deu 12:32 "Do everything that I have commanded you; do not add anything to it or take anything from it.

Deuteronomy 12:1-32

Deuteronomy 12 - The Worship God Commands

A. The place of worship.

1. (1-4) *The command to destroy Canaanite places of worship.*

These are the statutes and judgments which you shall be careful to observe in the land which the LORD God of your fathers is giving you to possess, all the days that you live on the earth. You shall utterly destroy all the places where the nations which you shall dispossess served their gods, on the high mountains and on the hills and under every green tree. And you shall destroy their altars, break their *sacred* pillars, and burn their wooden images with fire; you shall cut down the carved images of their gods and destroy their names from that place. You shall not worship the LORD your God with such things.

a. **You shall utterly destroy all the places:** Before anyone can worship God, there must be some places where he will no longer worship. There must be a destruction of the places where the ungodly worship.

i. The practice in the ancient world, which was always short on buildings, was to take a nice building such as a temple previously used to worship a prior god, and simply make it a place to worship one's own god. The LORD God wanted none of that in His own worship. He commanded that the places of pagan worship be completely destroyed, and that they **shall not worship the LORD your God with such things.**

ii. This is where the worship of many is corrupted. It isn't that they worship too little; they worship too much. They worship the LORD, *and* the things of the world. God doesn't want such worship. It is an abomination to Him.

iii. Many could really begin to worship God in Spirit and in truth (Joh 4:24), if they would only "destroy" in their hearts their pagan places of worship. Because they give their hearts to so many other things, there is little to give to the LORD.

b. **On the high mountains and on the hills and under every green tree:** Since much of the pagan worship of the Canaanites was a sexualized worship of fertility and nature, their shrines and temples were often in beautiful outdoor settings. God didn't want Israel to adopt this approach of worshipping the creature rather than the Creator (Rom 1:25).

2. (5-9) *The command to worship at God's appointed place.*

But you shall seek the place where the LORD your God chooses, out of all your tribes, to put His name for His dwelling place; and there you shall go. There you shall take your burnt offerings, your sacrifices, your tithes, the heave offerings of your hand, your vowed offerings, your freewill offerings, and the firstborn of your herds and flocks. And there you shall eat before the LORD your God, and you shall rejoice in all to which you have put your hand, you and your households, in which the LORD your God has blessed you. You shall not at all do as we are doing here today; every man doing whatever is right in his own eyes; for as yet you have not come to the rest and the inheritance which the LORD your God is giving you.

a. **And there you shall go:** Worship was not left to the opinion or whim of the individual Israelite. They had to worship God at His prescribed place, and among other worshippers of God. Worship is not a "do as you please" or a "Lone Ranger" activity.

b. **You shall seek the place:** It may not be easy to find the place where God wants you to worship, but it is out there. There is a place where He wants you to worship. He has not called you to follow Him in isolation.

c. **There you shall take your burnt offerings, your sacrifices:** The place of worship was to be a place of atonement, confession (which was made when hands

were laid on the head of the sacrificial victim), and cleansing.

d. **There you shall take... your tithes:** The place of worship was to be a place of giving. Of course, there were other places where an Israelite could give and be generous but giving had to begin at the place of worship God has appointed.

i. Some have thought that because Deu 12:6 mentions **your tithes**, that this is an *additional* tithe which was commanded of Israel, on top of the tithe commanded in Numbers 18. Some even call this the "festival tithe." But in context, this passage is only speaking of *where* to bring the tithe, not commanding an additional one to be brought.

e. **There you shall eat before the LORD your God:** The place of worship is to be a place of joyful fellowship with God and others.

f. **Not at all as we are doing here today - every man doing whatever is right in his own eyes:** Before Israel crossed over the Jordan, during the wilderness wanderings, each Israelite pretty much conducted their own worship as they pleased. But God was not really pleased with this; worship was not a matter left up to whatever pleased the individual. Real worship is concerned with what pleases God.

i. Much of what is called worship in today's church really isn't worship. It is self-focused, man-focused, and personal-experience-focused instead of being God focused. Much of today's worship is measured by how I feel instead of being measured by how God was honored and worshipped.

ii. "Singing should be congregational, but it should never be performed for the credit of the

congregation. 'Such remarkable singing! The place is quite renowned for its musical performances!' This is a poor achievement. Our singing should be such that God hears it with pleasure - singing in which there is not so much art as heart, not so much of musical sound as of spiritual emotion." (Spurgeon)

3. (10-14) *The joy of real worship in God's appointed place.*

But when you cross over the Jordan and dwell in the land which the LORD your God is giving you to inherit, and He gives you rest from all your enemies round about, so that you dwell in safety, then there will be the place where the LORD your God chooses to make His name abide. There you shall bring all that I command you: your burnt offerings, your sacrifices, your tithes, the heave offerings of your hand, and all your choice offerings which you vow to the LORD. And you shall rejoice before the LORD your God, you and your sons and your daughters, your male and female servants, and the Levite who is within your gates, since he has no portion nor inheritance with you. Take heed to yourself that you do not offer your burnt offerings in every place that you see; but in the place which the LORD chooses, in one of your tribes, there you shall offer your burnt offerings, and there you shall do all that I command you.

a. **There will be the place... the place which the LORD chooses:** A particular *place* is important to worship. The man who tells himself, "I can worship God just as well out on the golf course" is a *man doing whatever is right in his own eyes*. It is fine for him to worship God out on the golf course; but there must also be a specific *place* where he comes to worship with God's people.

i. This goes against the trend of our times. Studies find that among baby-boomers, 70% say that you should attend worship services not out of a sense of duty, but only if it "meets your needs." 80% say you can be a good Christian without attending church.

b. **And you shall rejoice before the LORD your God:** Worship at God's appointed place must be marked with joy. It is a good thing to come and honor our God and should be done with pleasure and joy.

i. "All Christian duties should be done joyfully; but especially the work of praising the Lord. I have been in congregations where the tune was dolorous to the very last degree; where the time was so dreadfully slow that one wondered whether they would ever be able to sing through the 119 Psalm; whether, to use Watt's expression, eternity would not be too short from them to get through it; and altogether, the spirit of the people has seemed to be so damp, so heavy, so dead, that we might have supposed that they were met to prepare their minds for a hanging rather than for blessing the ever-gracious God." (Charles Spurgeon, *Praise Thy God, O Zion*)

ii. "We ought not to worship God in a half-hearted sort of way; as if it were now our duty to bless God, but we felt it to be a weary business, and we would get it through as quickly as we could, and have done with it; and the sooner the better. No, no; 'All that is within me, bless his holy name.' Come, my heart, wake up, and summon all the powers which wait upon thee! Mechanical worship is easy, but worthless. Come rouse yourself, my brother! Rouse thyself, O my own soul!" (Spurgeon)

c. **And you shall rejoice:** The emphasis on **shall** shows that rejoicing is *commanded*. It is also commanded in the

New Testament; *Rejoice always* (1Th 5:16); *Rejoice in the Lord always. Again I will say, rejoice!* (Php 4:4). If you can't rejoice out of feeling like it, then rejoice out of being commanded.

i. "No one duty is more pressed in both the Testaments, than this of rejoicing in the Lord always, but specially in his immediate services." (Trapp)

B. The practice of worship.

1. (15-28) *Things permitted and prohibited in regard to butchering animals, sacrificing animals, and respecting the sanctity of blood.*

However, you may slaughter and eat meat within all your gates, whatever your heart desires, according to the blessing of the LORD your God which He has given you; the unclean and the clean may eat of it, of the gazelle and the deer alike. Only you shall not eat the blood; you shall pour it on the earth like water. You may not eat within your gates the tithe of your grain or your new wine or your oil, of the firstborn of your herd or your flock, of any of your offerings which you vow, of your freewill offerings, or of the heave offering of your hand. But you must eat them before the LORD your God in the place which the LORD your God chooses, you and your son and your daughter, your male servant and your female servant, and the Levite who is within your gates; and you shall rejoice before the LORD your God in all to which you put your hands. Take heed to yourself that you do not forsake the Levite as long as you live in your land. When the LORD your God enlarges your border as He has promised you, and you say, "Let me eat meat," because you long to eat meat, you may eat as much meat as your heart desires. If the place where the LORD your God chooses to put His name is too far

from you, then you may slaughter from your herd and from your flock which the LORD has given you, just as I have commanded you, and you may eat within your gates as much as your heart desires. Just as the gazelle and the deer are eaten, so you may eat them; the unclean and the clean alike may eat them. Only be sure that you do not eat the blood, for the blood *is* the life; you may not eat the life with the meat. You shall not eat it; you shall pour it on the earth like water. You shall not eat it, that it may go well with you and your children after you, when you do *what is* right in the sight of the LORD. Only the holy things which you have, and your vowed offerings, you shall take and go to the place which the LORD chooses. And you shall offer your burnt offerings, the meat and the blood, on the altar of the LORD your God; and the blood of your sacrifices shall be poured out on the altar of the LORD your God, and you shall eat the meat. Observe and obey all these words which I command you, that it may go well with you and your children after you forever, when you do *what is* good and right in the sight of the LORD your God.

- a. **You may slaughter and eat meat within all your gates:** In the ancient world, almost every time an animal was butchered it was sacrificed to a god. Here, the LORD made it clear that not every slaughtered animal was considered a sacrifice to Him.
- b. **You may not eat within your gates the tithe... the firstlings of your herd... your freewill offerings, or of the heave offerings:** This shows that animals which were offered in sacrifice, even if the one offering was to eat a portion, could only be killed at God's appointed place of worship.

c. **Only be sure that you do not eat the blood:** Since the blood was the picture of life in any animal or man (**for the blood is the life**), God would not allow Israel to eat meat that had not been properly bled. Instead, it was to be given to God by pouring it out on the earth.

2. (29-32) *The worship of God must be pure.*

When the LORD your God cuts off from before you the nations which you go to dispossess, and you displace them and dwell in their land, take heed to yourself that you are not ensnared to follow them, after they are destroyed from before you, and that you do not inquire after their gods, saying, "How did these nations serve their gods? I also will do likewise." You shall not worship the LORD your God in that way; for every abomination to the LORD which He hates they have done to their gods; for they burn even their sons and daughters in the fire to their gods. Whatever I command you, be careful to observe it; you shall not add to it nor take away from it.

a. **That you do not inquire after their gods:** Israel was commanded to guard itself against a sinful curiosity (**How did these nations serve their gods?**). There is an old proverb that says *curiosity killed the cat*, but ungodly curiosity has also killed many spiritual lives.

b. **You shall not worship the LORD your God that way:** God would not accept just any offering of worship. He had to be worshipped *in Spirit and in truth* (Joh 4:24)

c. **They burn even their sons and daughters in the fire to their gods:** This referred to the practice of Molech worship, where Canaanites offered up their children by placing them alive on a burning hot metal statue of Molech, while drum beats drowned out the screams of the tortured infants.

i. Israel had a tragic history of following after this horrible god Molech.

- At the least, Solomon sanctioned the worship of Molech, building a temple to this idol (1Ki 11:7).
- King Ahaz of Judah gave his own son to Molech (2Ki 16:3).
- One of the great crimes of the northern tribes of Israel was their worship of Molech, leading to the Assyrian captivity (2Ki 17:17).
- King Manasseh of Judah gave his son to Molech (2Ki 21:6).
- Up to the days of King Josiah of Judah, Molech worship continued, because he destroyed a place of worship to that idol (2Ki 23:10).

d. **Whatever I command you, be careful to observe it:** The standard for worship was reflected in God's Word - not in human preference or opinion.

Deu 13:1 "Prophets or interpreters of dreams may promise a miracle or a wonder,

Deu 13:2 in order to lead you to worship and serve gods that you have not worshiped before. Even if what they promise comes true,

Deu 13:3 do not pay any attention to them. The LORD your God is using them to test you, to see if you love the LORD with all your heart.

Deu 13:4 Follow the LORD and honor him; obey him and keep his commands; worship him and be faithful to him.

Deu 13:5 But put to death any interpreters of dreams or prophets that tell you to rebel against the LORD, who rescued you from Egypt, where you were slaves. Such people are evil and are trying to lead you away from the life

that the LORD has commanded you to live. They must be put to death, in order to rid yourselves of this evil.

Deu 13:6 "Even your brother or your son or your daughter or the wife you love or your closest friend may secretly encourage you to worship other gods, gods that you and your ancestors have never worshiped.

Deu 13:7 Some of them may encourage you to worship the gods of the people who live near you or the gods of those who live far away.

Deu 13:8 But do not let any of them persuade you; do not even listen to them. Show them no mercy or pity, and do not protect them.

Deu 13:9 Kill them! Be the first to stone them, and then let everyone else stone them too.

Deu 13:10 Stone them to death! They tried to lead you away from the LORD your God, who rescued you from Egypt, where you were slaves.

Deu 13:11 Then all the people of Israel will hear what happened; they will be afraid, and no one will ever again do such an evil thing.

Deu 13:12 "When you are living in the towns that the LORD your God gives you, you may hear

Deu 13:13 that some worthless people of your nation have misled the people of their town to worship gods that you have never worshiped before.

Deu 13:14 If you hear such a rumor, investigate it thoroughly; and if it is true that this evil thing did happen,

Deu 13:15 then kill all the people in that town and all their livestock too. Destroy that town completely.

Deu 13:16 Bring together all the possessions of the people who live there and pile them up in the town square. Then burn the town and everything in it as an offering to the LORD your God. It must be left in ruins forever and never again be rebuilt.

Deu 13:17 Do not keep for yourselves anything that was condemned to destruction, and then the LORD will turn from his fierce anger and show you mercy. He will be merciful to you and make you a numerous people, as he promised your ancestors,

Deu 13:18 if you obey all his commands that I have given you today, and do what he requires.

Deuteronomy 13:1-18

Deuteronomy 13 - Keeping the Worship of God Pure

A. Protecting against those who would entice Israel to serve other gods.

1. (1-3) *Protecting against the deceiver who comes with miraculous signs.*

If there arises among you a prophet or a dreamer of dreams, and he gives you a sign or a wonder, and the sign or the wonder comes to pass, of which he spoke to you, saying, “Let us go after other gods”; which you have not known; “and let us serve them,” you shall not listen to the words of that prophet or that dreamer of dreams, for the LORD your God is testing you to know whether you love the LORD your God with all your heart and with all your soul.

a. **A dreamer of dreams:** Dreams can be from God (as in Num 12:6, or in Gen 37:5-11), or they can be false prophesies (as in Jer 23:25-26). We must be careful to not put too much stock in dreams, and instead allow God to bring *confirmation* to any dream we believe brings a message from Him. It would be very unusual for God to speak *alone* through a dream, without other confirmation.

b. **And the sign or the wonder comes to pass:** Moses warned the people that there may arise from among

them prophets or workers of signs who could also produce a **sign** or a **wonder**.

- i. Deu 18:22 tells what to do with a prophet who speaks a word and it does *not* come to pass. But this passage tells what to do with a prophet who speaks a word and it comes to pass, but they then speak against what God has already revealed in His word.
- c. **And the sign or the wonder comes to pass:** This sobering fact is ignored by many Christians in our age which neglects discernment. The fact is that signs and wonders can never be *the* evidence of truth or God's hand.
 - i. Those who are immediately convinced at the sight of supernatural power or reality are in danger of great deception. 2Th 2:9 reminds us that the *coming of the lawless one is according to the working of Satan, with all power, signs, and lying wonders.*
 - ii. This is why Jesus said *and these signs will follow those who believe* (Mar 16:17). Signs are to follow believers, instead of believers following signs.
- d. **You shall not listen to the words of that prophet or dreamer of dreams:** Godly discernment will always carefully examine the *message* of a spiritual leader, instead of the spiritual experiences which may surround him or her.
- e. **The LORD your God is testing you to know whether you love the LORD your God with all your heart:** This explains one of God's reasons in allowing such deceivers to exist among His people - to allow the hearts of His people to be tested and proven, to see if they really love the God of truth or are merely seeking a spiritual sign or experience.

i. "And particularly there are many signs, yea, such as men may think to be wonders, which may be wrought by evil spirits, God so permitting it for divers wise and just reasons, not only for the trial of the good, as it here follows, but also for the punishment of ungodly men, who would not receive Divine truths, though attested by many evident and unquestionable miracles, and therefore are most justly exposed to these temptations to believe lies." (Poole)

2. (4-5) *The penalty for the deceiver who comes with miraculous signs.*

You shall walk after the LORD your God and fear Him, and keep His commandments and obey His voice, and you shall serve Him and hold fast to Him. But that prophet or that dreamer of dreams shall be put to death, because he has spoken in order to turn you away from the LORD your God, who brought you out of the land of Egypt and redeemed you from the house of bondage, to entice you from the way in which the LORD your God commanded you to walk. So you shall put away the evil from your midst.

a. **You shall walk after the LORD:** Israel was first instructed to not let a deceiver succeed in leading them astray. No matter how attractive the deception, they were to keep focused on a faithful walk with God according to His truth.

b. **But that prophet or that dreamer of dreams shall be put to death:** Ancient Israel was a unique situation, where the civil government was also directly appointed by God and charged with maintaining spiritual order as well as civil order. Therefore, such heresy and deception were capital crimes - punishable by execution.

i. For many centuries, when the church held political power, it often exercised this penalty also. Heretics

were often given over to the civil government for execution. Trapp writes in the mid seventeenth century, "This power is still in the Christian magistrate, to inflict capital punishment on gross heretics."

ii. While we admire their priorities (they judged it much more serious for a heretic to kill men's eternal souls than to kill their temporal bodies), they were ignorant of an important principle of Jesus' kingdom in contrast to the ancient kingdom of Israel: Jesus declared that His kingdom was *not* of this world (Joh 18:36), while the kingdom of Israel was very much *of* this world. Never before or since has God appointed such a kingdom as Israel to be His nation in this world as He appointed ancient Israel, so it would be wrong for us to execute heretics today.

iii. Still, the church as a community and Christians as individuals should reject and refuse to support such heretics among them. They should use discernment to set aside those who promote themselves as miracle working men and women of anointing and faith, yet who teach heresy in essential doctrines.

3. (6-11) The penalty for a relative who would lead an Israelite to worship other gods.

If your brother, the son of your mother, your son or your daughter, the wife of your bosom, or your friend who is as your own soul, secretly entices you, saying, "Let us go and serve other gods," which you have not known, neither you nor your fathers, of the gods of the people which are all around you, near to you or far off from you, from one end of the earth to the other end of the earth, you shall not consent to him or listen to him, nor shall your eye pity him, nor shall you spare him or conceal him; but you shall surely kill

him; your hand shall be first against him to put him to death, and afterward the hand of all the people. And you shall stone him with stones until he dies, because he sought to entice you away from the LORD your God, who brought you out of the land of Egypt, from the house of bondage. So all Israel shall hear and fear, and not again do such wickedness as this among you.

a. **Brother... your son or daughter... the wife... your friend:** If any of these close human relationships would lead one to the worship of other gods, they were not only to be rejected (**you shall not consent to him or listen to him**), they were to be executed (**you shall surely kill him**).

i. In fact, the relative should be one of the main witnesses against the guilty party: **your hand shall be first against him to put him to death**. This was the “casting of the first stone,” the initiation of execution by one of the witnesses to the capital crime.

ii. This also demonstrates that God never puts highest priority on family relationships; if a family member forsakes the LORD, we are never to follow them away from the LORD. Jesus always comes first, as He said in Mat 10:37 : *He who loves father or mother more than Me is not worthy of Me. And he who loves son or daughter more than Me is not worthy of Me.*

b. **Secretly entices you:** This demonstrates how seriously God regards leading someone else into idolatry. Even if a sympathetic person entices you, and even if they do it in private, enticement to idolatry is not to be tolerated.

i. This brings to mind the words of Jesus in Mat 18:6 : *But whoever causes one of these little ones who*

believe in Me to sin, it would be better for him if a millstone were hung around his neck, and he were drowned in the depth of the sea. Anyone who leads one of God's people astray is greatly offending the heart of God.

- c. **So all Israel shall hear and fear:** Many modern researchers and pundits say that capital punishment is no deterrent to crime. God says it is a deterrent (properly practiced, of course).

B. Protecting the nation as a whole against those who would lead them into idolatry.

1. (12-14a) *How to deal with reports of a city given over to idolatry.*

If you hear someone in one of your cities, which the LORD your God gives you to dwell in, saying, "Corrupt men have gone out from among you and enticed the inhabitants of their city, saying, 'Let us go and serve other gods'" which you have not known; then you shall inquire, search out, and ask diligently.

- a. **Then you shall inquire:** If reports arose regarding an Israelite city given over to idolatry, there was first to be a careful investigation.
- b. **Search out, and ask diligently:** This guarded against a harsh judgment; perhaps there were a few idolaters in the city who needed to be punished, but perhaps the city was not given over to idolatry. God commanded a careful investigation.

2. (14b-18) *The penalty for a city given over to idolatry.*

And if it is indeed true and certain that such an abomination was committed among you, you shall surely strike the inhabitants of that city with the edge of the sword; utterly destroying it, all that is in it and its livestock, with the edge of the sword. And you

shall gather all its plunder into the middle of the street, and completely burn with fire the city and all its plunder, for the LORD your God. It shall be a heap forever; it shall not be built again. So none of the accursed things shall remain in your hand, that the LORD may turn from the fierceness of His anger and show you mercy, have compassion on you and multiply you, just as He swore to your fathers, because you have listened to the voice of the LORD your God, to keep all His commandments which I command you today, to do **what is right in the eyes of the LORD your God.**

a. **Such an abomination:** The word **abomination** here refers to a gross, offensive idolatry. Later in Daniel and in the New Testament, the word is used in the phrase

abomination of desolation, which refers to the ultimate idolatry of the Antichrist - the establishing of an idolatrous image of himself in the most holy place (2Th 2:3-4).

i. "The term *abominable thing* is used in the Old Testament for something that is totally displeasing to God and denotes something impure, unclean, and totally devoid of holiness." (Thompson)

b. **You shall surely strike the inhabitants of that city with the edge of the sword; utterly destroying it:** If the investigation finds that the city is indeed given over to idolatry, it is then to be treated as a Canaanite city. They were to **utterly** destroy the city, including its property. The property was to be given to the LORD by destroying it, a form of "sacred destruction."

i. This made certain that no one could profit materially by declaring a city given over to idolatry. If this provision were not in the Law of Moses one could imagine a city being plundered under this pretense.

ii. "The very same punishment which was inflicted upon the cities of the cursed Canaanites, to whom having made themselves equal in sin, it is but fit and just that God should equal them in punishment." (Poole)

c. **It shall be a heap forever; it shall not be built again:** The destroyed town was to be left as **a heap forever**. The word **heap** is literally *tel*, and the word *tel* is used in Arabic for any ruined sight. Throughout Israel today, one will see curious mounds rising from a plain. These *tels* are the heaped up remains of ancient destroyed cities, covered over with centuries of dust and accumulated dirt.

d. **To do what is right in the eyes of the LORD your God:** This demonstrates that Israelites were never to regard ethnic or national bonds greater than the bonds that tied them to the LORD God; if their fellow countrymen were given over to idolatry, they were not to be spared.

i. This chapter asks an important question: What would it take to lead you away from God? Would signs and wonders do it? What if your mate forsook God, or all of your friends? What if culture, or nationalism, or ethnic ties called you away from Jesus? We must never allow such ties to come before our bond to Jesus. We must decide, as the song says, "Though none go with me, still I will follow."

Clean and Unclean Food

Deu 14:1 "You are the people of the LORD your God. So when you mourn for the dead, don't gash yourselves or shave the front of your head, as other people do.

Deu 14:2 You belong to the LORD your God; he has chosen you to be his own people from among all the peoples who

live on earth.

Deu 14:3 "Do not eat anything that the LORD has declared unclean.

Deu 14:4 You may eat these animals: cattle, sheep, goats,

Deu 14:5 deer, wild sheep, wild goats, or antelopes—

Deu 14:6 any animals that have divided hoofs and that also chew the cud.

Deu 14:7 But no animals may be eaten unless they have divided hoofs and also chew the cud. You may not eat camels, rabbits, or rock badgers. They must be considered unclean; they chew the cud but do not have divided hoofs.

Deu 14:8 Do not eat pigs. They must be considered unclean; they have divided hoofs but do not chew the cud. Do not eat any of these animals or even touch their dead bodies.

Deu 14:9 "You may eat any kind of fish that has fins and scales,

Deu 14:10 but anything living in the water that does not have fins and scales may not be eaten; it must be considered unclean.

Deu 14:11 "You may eat any clean bird.

Deu 14:12 (12-18) But these are the kinds of birds you are not to eat: eagles, owls, hawks, falcons; buzzards, vultures, crows; ostriches; seagulls, storks, herons, pelicans, cormorants; hoopoes; and bats.

Deu 14:19 "All winged insects are unclean; do not eat them.

Deu 14:20 You may eat any clean insect.

Deu 14:21 "Do not eat any animal that dies a natural death. You may let the foreigners who live among you eat it, or you may sell it to other foreigners. But you belong to the LORD your God; you are his people. "Do not cook a young sheep or goat in its mother's milk.

Tithes

Deu 14:22 "Set aside a tithe—a tenth of all that your fields produce each year.

Deu 14:23 Then go to the one place where the LORD your God has chosen to be worshiped; and there in his presence eat the tithes of your grain, wine, and olive oil, and the first-born of your cattle and sheep. Do this so that you may learn to honor the LORD your God always.

Deu 14:24 If the place of worship is too far from your home for you to carry there the tithe of the produce that the LORD has blessed you with, then do this:

Deu 14:25 Sell your produce and take the money with you to the one place of worship.

Deu 14:26 Spend it on whatever you want—beef, lamb, wine, beer—and there, in the presence of the LORD your God, you and your families are to eat and enjoy yourselves.

Deu 14:27 "Do not neglect the Levites who live in your towns; they have no property of their own.

Deu 14:28 At the end of every third year bring the tithe of all your crops and store it in your towns.

Deu 14:29 This food is for the Levites, since they own no property, and for the foreigners, orphans, and widows who live in your towns. They are to come and get all they need. Do this, and the LORD your God will bless you in everything you do.

Deuteronomy 14:1-29

Deuteronomy 14 - Living All of Your Life for the LORD

A. Commands regarding separation from pagans.

1. (1) The command to abstain from pagan burial customs.

You are the children of the LORD your God; you shall not cut yourselves nor shave the front of your head for the dead.

a. **You shall not cut yourselves nor shave the front of your head for the dead:** Among the pagan cultures surrounding Israel, it was common to cut one's self, or shave the front of one's head, **for the dead** - that is, as a part of pagan burial rituals.

i. "The cutting of the body and the shaving of the head were common mourning rites in the ancient Near East and are referred to in many places in the Old Testament (Isa 3:24; Isa 15:2; Isa 22:12; Jer 16:6; Jer 41:5; Eze 7:18; Amo 8:10; Mic 1:16).” (Thompson)

ii. "The mutilation of the body persists still in some countries, e.g. in New Guinea, where a mourner, especially a woman, removes a joint of a finger, and in extreme cases, more than one finger joint." (Thompson)

b. **You are the children of the LORD your God:** Among Christians today, there is something wrong if our burial customs are just as the rituals of the ungodly. Paul wrote in 1Th 4:13 : *But I do not want you to be ignorant, brethren, concerning those who have fallen asleep, lest you sorrow as others who have no hope.* We may certainly mourn the passing of our loved ones, but as those who have eternal hope in Jesus, we should be different in our mourning.

2. (2) *The principle behind the commands for separation.*

For you are a holy people to the LORD your God, and the LORD has chosen you to be a people for Himself, a special treasure above all the peoples who are on the face of the earth.

a. **You are a holy people:** The idea behind **holy** is "separate." The people of Israel were a people separate

unto the LORD. In Jesus, we also are a holy people: *But you are... a holy nation* (1Pe 2:9).

b. **The LORD has chosen you to be a people for Himself:** The people of Israel were chosen by God, to be His own special people. In Jesus, we also are a chosen people, special to God: *But you are a chosen generation... His own special people* (1Pe 2:9).

c. **A special treasure:** The people of Israel were a special treasure to God. In Jesus, we also are a special treasure to God: We are *His inheritance* (Eph 1:18).

d. **Above all the people who are on the face of the earth:** Each of these glorious privileges carried with it a special responsibility. If God regarded Israel as something special among the nations, they had to conduct themselves as something special among the nations.

3. (3-21) *The command to separate in regard to foods.*

These are the animals which you may eat: the ox, the sheep, the goat, the deer, the gazelle, the roe deer, the wild goat, the mountain goat, the antelope, and the mountain sheep. And you may eat every animal with cloven hooves, having the hoof split into two parts, and that chews the cud, among the animals. Nevertheless, of those that chew the cud or have cloven hooves, you shall not eat, such as these: the camel, the hare, and the rock hyrax; for they chew the cud but do not have cloven hooves; they are unclean for you. Also the swine is unclean for you, because it has cloven hooves, yet does not chew the cud; you shall not eat their flesh or touch their dead carcasses. These you may eat of all that are in the waters: you may eat all that have fins and scales. And whatever does not have fins and scales you shall not eat; it is unclean for you. All clean birds you may eat. But these you shall not eat: the eagle, the vulture, the

buzzard, the red kite, the falcon, and the kite after their kinds; every raven after its kind; the ostrich, the short-eared owl, the seagull, and the hawk after their kinds; the little owl, the screech owl, the white owl, the jackdaw, the carrion vulture, the fisher owl, the stork, the heron after its kind, and the hoopoe and the bat. Also every creeping thing that flies is unclean for you; they shall not be eaten. You may eat all clean birds. You shall not eat anything that dies of itself; you may give it to the alien who is within your gates, that he may eat it, or you may sell it to a foreigner; for you are a holy people to the LORD your God. You shall not boil a young goat in its mother's milk.

- a. **These are the animals which you may eat:** Only certain mammals were allowed to be eaten, and the rule was simple. If an animal had a divided hoof (not a single hoof as a horse has), and chewed its cud, it could be eaten. For example, the camel, the rock hyrax, and the hare all chew the cud, but do not have divided hooves - instead, they have paws - so they are considered unkosher. Additionally, the swine has a divided hoof, but does not chew the cud - so it is considered unkosher.
- b. **These you may eat of all that are in the waters:** Only certain sea creatures could be eaten, and the rule was simple. Any water creature having both fins and scales was kosher and could be eaten. Therefore, most fishes were considered clean - except a fish like the catfish, which has no scales. Shellfish would be unclean, because clams, crabs, oysters, and lobster all do not have fins and scales.
- c. **All clean birds you may eat:** Only certain birds could be eaten; though there is no rule given to determine if a bird is clean or unclean, the specifically mentioned unclean birds (and flying **creeping things**)

are either predators or scavengers; these were considered unclean.

- i. Among these animals, they fall into one of three categories: *predators* (unclean because they ate both the flesh and the blood of animals), *scavengers* (unclean because they were carriers of disease, and they regularly contacted dead bodies), or *potentially poisonous or dangerous* foods such as shellfish and the like. Eliminating these from the diet of Israel no doubt had a healthy effect, and one of the reasons for the dietary laws of Israel was to keep Israel healthy!
- d. **You shall not eat anything that dies of itself:** If any animal **dies of itself**, it has not been properly bled; therefore, it is unkosher.
 - i. It was important to bleed animals before eating them, because the blood represented the life principle of the animal (Lev 17:11), and the life principle belonged to God and God alone. Another reason for the dietary laws was to project an important symbolism to Israel regarding blood and the sanctity of the life principle.
- e. **You shall not boil a young goat in its mother's milk:** This unusual law was a command to not imitate a common pagan fertility ritual. It illustrated the third principle behind the dietary laws of Israel: They were a statement of separation from the nations and prevented Israel from having easy fellowship (sitting down at a common meal) with Gentiles.

- i. This law, because of strange rabbinical interpretations, became the reason why one cannot have a kosher cheeseburger. Observant Jews today will not eat milk and meat at the same meal (or even on the same plates with the same utensils cooked in the same pots), because the rabbis insist that the

meat in the hamburger may have come from the calf of the cow that gave the milk for the cheese, and the cheese and the meat would “boil” together in one’s stomach and be a violation of this command.

B. The command of the tithe.

1. (22-23) *The command to tithe.*

You shall truly tithe all the increase of your grain that the field produces year by year. And you shall eat before the LORD your God, in the place where He chooses to make His name abide, the tithe of your grain and your new wine and your oil, of the firstborn of your herds and your flocks, that you may learn to fear the LORD your God always.

a. **You shall truly tithe:** The word **truly** is important; since the tithe described giving ten percent, God commanded that it *really* be ten percent. One might easily imagine Israelites discovering ways to give God less than **truly** ten percent.

b. **All the increase of your grain:** Seemingly, this meant the grain left over after the seed-grain was taken out. This meant that the tithe was assessed on the *income*, not on the total assets.

c. **You shall eat before the LORD:** When the tithe was delivered to the tabernacle (and later, to the temple), a portion of the tithe was enjoyed in a ceremonial meal “with” the LORD. The remainder was given to the priest.

d. **That you may learn to fear the LORD your God always:** This was the purpose of tithing; to build an honor and reverence for God. The paraphrase in the Living Bible puts it plainly: *The purpose of tithing is to teach you always to put God first in your lives* (Deu 14:23 b, Living Bible).

2. (24-27) “Long-distance” tithing.

But if the journey is too long for you, so that you are not able to carry *the tithe*, or if the place where the LORD your God chooses to put His name is too far from you, when the LORD your God has blessed you, then you shall exchange *it* for money, take the money in your hand, and go to the place which the LORD your God chooses. And you shall spend that money for whatever your heart desires: for oxen or sheep, for wine or similar drink, for whatever your heart desires; you shall eat there before the LORD your God, and you shall rejoice, you and your household. You shall not forsake the Levite who *is* within your gates, for he has no part nor inheritance with you.

- a. **But if the journey is too long for you:** Since the tithe was to be brought to one place for the whole nation, some would be farther than others. And, if someone was far away, they would find it difficult to transport the grain and livestock the tithe required.
- b. **You shall exchange it for money:** If distance prevented the easy transport of the animals, they could exchange their tithe for money, and then use the money to tithe with when they came to the tabernacle (and later, the temple).
- c. **You shall rejoice, you and your household:** Laws like this show us that God is a common-sense God. He does not place unreasonable demands on His people. He made a way for them to more conveniently tithe.

3. (28-29) *The third-year tithe.*

At the end of every third year you shall bring out the tithe of your produce of that year and store *it* up within your gates. And the Levite, because he has no portion nor inheritance with you, and the stranger and the fatherless and the widow who *are* within your gates, may come and eat and be satisfied, that the

LORD your God may bless you in all the work of your hand which you do.

a. **At the end of every third year you shall bring out the tithe of your produce of that year:** Some have said this speaks of another tithe (sometimes called the "poor tithe") to be brought every three years. Yet since it speaks of **the tithe**, and since it also went to the Levite and not only to the poor, it is best to understand that this was not an additional tithe, but a command that once every three years the tithe also be available to the poor, not only to the Levite.

i. As Kalland points out: "The Jewish rabbis have usually held that there were three tithes: (1) for the priests and Levites, (2) for the communal meals, (3) every third year for the nonlanded (i.e., the Levites, aliens, fatherless, and widows)." Kalland goes on to object to this rabbinic approach, and accurately observes, "So all the designations of tithes speak of one basic tithe to be put to various uses."

b. **That the LORD your God may bless you in all the work of your hand which you do:** God will bless the giving heart. Ask anyone who gives as the Bible instructs them to give - they are blessed.

i. The New Testament nowhere specifically commands tithing, but it certainly does speak of it in a positive light if it is done with a right heart (Luk 11:42).

ii. It is also important to understand that tithing is not a principle dependent on the Mosaic Law; as Heb 7:5-9 explains, tithing was practiced and honored by God before the law of Moses.

iii. What the New Testament does speak with great clarity on is the principle of giving; that giving should be regular, planned, proportional, and private

(1Co 16:1-4); that it must be generous, freely given, and cheerful (2 Corinthians 9).

iv. Since the New Testament doesn't emphasize tithing, one might not be strict on it for Christians (though some Christians do argue against tithing on the basis of self-interest). Yet since giving is to be proportional, we should be giving *some* percentage - and ten percent is a good benchmark - and *starting* place. For some to give ten percent is nowhere near enough; for others, at their present time, five percent may be a massive step of faith.

v. If our question is, "How little can I give and still be pleasing to God?" our heart isn't in the right place at all. We should have the attitude of some early Christians, who essentially said: "We're not under the tithe - we can give *more!*" Giving and financial management is a *spiritual* issue, not just a financial one (Luk 16:11).

The Sabbatical Year

Deu 15:1 "At the end of every seventh year you are to cancel the debts of those who owe you money.

Deu 15:2 This is how it is to be done. Each of you who has lent money to any Israelite is to cancel the debt; you must not try to collect the money; the LORD himself has declared the debt canceled.

Deu 15:3 You may collect what a foreigner owes you, but you must not collect what any of your own people owe you.

Deu 15:4 "The LORD your God will bless you in the land that he is giving you. Not one of your people will be poor

Deu 15:5 if you obey him and carefully observe everything that I command you today.

Deu 15:6 The LORD will bless you, as he has promised. You will lend money to many nations, but you will not have to

borrow from any; you will have control over many nations, but no nation will have control over you.

Deu 15:7 "If in any of the towns in the land that the LORD your God is giving you there are Israelites in need, then do not be selfish and refuse to help them.

Deu 15:8 Instead, be generous and lend them as much as they need.

Deu 15:9 Do not refuse to lend them something, just because the year when debts are canceled is near. Do not let such an evil thought enter your mind. If you refuse to make the loan, they will cry out to the LORD against you, and you will be held guilty.

Deu 15:10 Give to them freely and unselfishly, and the LORD will bless you in everything you do.

Deu 15:11 There will always be some Israelites who are poor and in need, and so I command you to be generous to them.

Deu 15:12 "If any Israelites, male or female, sell themselves to you as slaves, you are to release them after they have served you for six years. When the seventh year comes, you must let them go free.

Deu 15:13 When you set them free, do not send them away empty-handed.

Deu 15:14 Give to them generously from what the LORD has blessed you with—sheep, grain, and wine.

Deu 15:15 Remember that you were slaves in Egypt and the LORD your God set you free; that is why I am now giving you this command.

Deu 15:16 "But your slave may not want to leave; he may love you and your family and be content to stay.

Deu 15:17 Then take him to the door of your house and there pierce his ear; he will then be your slave for life. Treat your female slave in the same way.

Deu 15:18 Do not be resentful when you set slaves free; after all, they have served you for six years at half the cost of hired servants. Do this, and the LORD your God will bless you in all that you do.

Deu 15:19 "Set aside for the LORD your God all the first-born males of your cattle and sheep; don't use any of these cattle for work and don't shear any of these sheep.

Deu 15:20 Each year you and your family are to eat them in the LORD's presence at the one place of worship.

Deu 15:21 But if there is anything wrong with the animals, if they are crippled or blind or have any other serious defect, you must not sacrifice them to the LORD your God.

Deu 15:22 You may eat such animals at home. All of you, whether ritually clean or unclean, may eat them, just as you eat deer or antelope.

Deu 15:23 But do not use their blood for food; instead, you must pour it out on the ground like water.

Deuteronomy 15:1-23

Deuteronomy 15 - Laws Regarding the Poor

A. Laws regarding the poor.

1. (1-6) Release of debts every seventh year.

At the end of every seven years you shall grant a release of debts. And this is the form of the release: Every creditor who has lent anything to his neighbor shall release it; he shall not require it of his neighbor or his brother, because it is called the LORD's release. Of a foreigner you may require it; but you shall give up your claim to what is owed by your brother, except when there may be no poor among you; for the LORD will greatly bless you in the land which the LORD your God is giving you to possess as an inheritance; only if you carefully obey the voice of the

LORD your God, to observe with care all these commandments which I command you today. For the LORD your God will bless you just as He promised you; you shall lend to many nations, but you shall not borrow; you shall reign over many nations, but they shall not reign over you.

- a. **You shall grant a release of debts:** In Israel, money was always loaned with the understanding that every seventh year, debts would be canceled. So there was no long-term debt in this sense - money could never be borrowed, or owed, for more than six years.
- b. **It is the LORD's release:** This was an important matter to God; the release was said to be **the LORD's release**. As Israel obeyed this command, there would never be a permanent under-class in Israel. Some might go through a bad period but would have the opportunity to rebuild their lives financially on a regular basis.
- c. **When there may be no poor among you:** God established an economic system wherein no one *had* to be chronically poor. If people would obey the LORD, He would bless (both sovereignly and as the natural result of the obedience), and they would not be poor.
 - i. However, Deu 15:11 - just a few verses down - states: *For the poor will never cease from the land.* Is God contradicting Himself? Not at all. He knows that He has established a system where no one *must* be chronically poor, yet He knew that because of disobedience, some would, and there would always be the poor in Israel.
 - ii. So, God did not guarantee prosperity for any one in Israel; but He did guarantee opportunity for prosperity for an obedient Israel.

d. **You shall lend to many nations:** If Israel obeyed and the individual citizens of Israel enjoyed the blessing of God's prosperity, then they would as a nation be prosperous, and blessed above other nations.

2. (7-11) *The command to be generous to the poor.*

If there is among you a poor man of your brethren, within any of the gates in your land which the LORD your God is giving you, you shall not harden your heart nor shut your hand from your poor brother, but you shall open your hand wide to him and willingly lend him sufficient for his need, whatever he needs. Beware lest there be a wicked thought in your heart, saying, "The seventh year, the year of release, is at hand," and your eye be evil against your poor brother and you give him nothing, and he cry out to the LORD against you, and it become sin among you. You shall surely give to him, and your heart should not be grieved when you give to him, because for this thing the LORD your God will bless you in all your works and in all to which you put your hand. For the poor will never cease from the land; therefore I command you, saying, "You shall open your hand wide to your brother, to your poor and your needy, in your land."

a. **You shall not harden your heart nor shut your hand from your poor brother:** The law of release in the seventh year was never to be used to discourage giving to those in need. The law might discourage *lending* to the poor, therefore God wanted Israel to be generous givers to those in need.

b. **Of your brethren:** This reminds us of Gal 6:10 - *Therefore, as we have opportunity, let us do good to all, especially to those who are of the household of faith.* Our charitable giving is to begin with those brothers and

sisters closest to us, though it certainly can extend outward from there.

3. (12-15) *The command to release slaves every seventh year.*

If your brother, a Hebrew man, or a Hebrew woman, is sold to you and serves you six years, then in the seventh year you shall let him go free from you. And when you send him away free from you, you shall not let him go away empty-handed; you shall supply him liberally from your flock, from your threshing floor, and from your winepress. From what the LORD has blessed you with, you shall give to him. You shall remember that you were a slave in the land of Egypt, and the LORD your God redeemed you; therefore I command you this thing today.

a. **In the seventh year you shall let him go free from you:** Even as debts were to be canceled every seventh year, so were slaves to be freed. The slaves thought of here are those who have had to sell themselves into slavery because of their debt. This made certain that a “bankruptcy” did not harm an Israelite all their life. The worst that could happen is they would have to serve someone without pay for six years.

b. **You shall not let him go away empty-handed:** God commanded generosity to the departing slave, giving him something to start his new life with. This would give the slave about to be freed hope and greater incentive to please his master.

4. (16-18) *The law of the bond-slave.*

And if it happens that he says to you, “I will not go away from you,” because he loves you and your house, since he prospers with you, then you shall take an awl and thrust it through his ear to the door,

and he shall be your servant forever. Also to your female servant you shall do likewise. It shall not seem hard to you when you send him away free from you; for he has been worth a double hired servant in serving you six years. Then the LORD your God will bless you in all that you do.

- a. **If it happens that he says to you, "I will not go away from you":** If a slave loved his master, and wanted to continue to serve him, he was not required to leave his master at the seventh year.
- b. **Because he loves you... you shall take an awl and thrust it through his ear to the door:** The willing slave could stay, and his status was declared by piercing through his ear lobe with an awl at the door of his master's home. In this, he declared his love and devotion to his master - a willing slave, who was free to choose and yet chose his master.
 - i. Jesus is the great fulfillment of this willing slave. Jesus said prophetically in Psa 40:6 : *My ears You have opened*, it speaks of this “opening” of the ear in the bond-slave ceremony. He was the willing bond-slave of God the Father.
 - ii. Isa 50:5-7 shows that Jesus’ character as the willing slave was most perfectly shown in His sufferings at the cross: *The Lord GOD has opened My ear; and I was not rebellious, nor did I turn away. I gave My back to those who struck Me, and My cheeks to those who plucked out the beard; I did not hide My face from shame and spitting. For the Lord GOD will help Me; therefore I will not be disgraced; Therefore I have set My face like a flint, and I know that I will not be ashamed.*
 - iii. The Christian is also to be a willing slave of God. The common New Testament word *doulos* describes

this kind of slave. Hiebert says of *doulos*, "a slave, a bondservant, one who is in a permanent relation of servitude to another... Among the Greeks, with their strong sense of personal freedom, the term carried a degrading connotation."

c. **He shall be your servant forever:** Once agreeing to be a bond slave, that one was committed to their master forever. It was a permanent relationship.

i. Pagans had a custom of branding the slave with the name or the sign of the owner; Paul refers to himself as just such a slave in Gal 6:17 : *From now on, let no one trouble me, for I bear in my body the marks of the Lord Jesus.* Paul was a slave for life to Jesus.

B. The law of the firstborn.

1. (19) *The principle of the firstborn.*

All the firstborn males that come from your herd and your flock you shall sanctify to the LORD your God; you shall do no work with the firstborn of your herd, nor shear the firstborn of your flock.

a. **Sanctify to the LORD:** This means to "set apart to the LORD"; the firstborn was to be set apart to God. The firstborn animal was not to be used as regular domesticated animal - **you shall do no work with the firstborn of your herd, not shear the firstborn of your flock.**

b. **All the firstborn males:** This was for three reasons. First, because Israel was God's firstborn (Exo 4:22), and this honored that fact. Second, because the firstborn was thought to be the best, and the best was always given to God. Finally, it was to be a reminder to all generations of when God redeemed Israel, His firstborn.

2. (20-23) *What to do with the giving of the firstborn.*

You and your household shall eat it before the LORD your God year by year in the place which the LORD chooses. But if there is a defect in it, if it is lame or blind or has any serious defect, you shall not sacrifice it to the LORD your God. You may eat it within your gates; the unclean and the clean person alike may eat it, as if it were a gazelle or a deer. Only you shall not eat its blood; you shall pour it on the ground like water.

- a. **You and your household shall eat it before the LORD your God:** When the firstborn animal was brought to the tabernacle (or later, the temple) and given to the priests for sacrifice unto the LORD, a portion of the sacrifice went to the family that brought the animal. It was given so that they could eat a joyful ceremonial meal before the LORD.
- b. **If there is any defect in it:** If this was the case, the animal was given to the priests, but not sacrificed unto the LORD - or, it was redeemed for money and the money given unto the LORD.

Passover

Deu 16:1 "Honor the LORD your God by celebrating Passover in the month of Abib; it was on a night in that month that he rescued you from Egypt.

Deu 16:2 Go to the one place of worship and slaughter there one of your sheep or cattle for the Passover meal to honor the LORD your God.

Deu 16:3 When you eat this meal, do not eat bread prepared with yeast. For seven days you are to eat bread prepared without yeast, as you did when you had to leave Egypt in such a hurry. Eat this bread—it will be called the bread of suffering—so that as long as you live you will remember the day you came out of Egypt, that place of suffering.

Deu 16:4 For seven days no one in your land is to have any yeast in the house; and the meat of the animal killed on the evening of the first day must be eaten that same night.

Deu 16:5 (5-6) "Slaughter the Passover animals at the one place of worship—and nowhere else in the land that the LORD your God will give you. Do it at sunset, the time of day when you left Egypt.

Deu 16:7 Boil the meat and eat it at the one place of worship; and the next morning return home.

Deu 16:8 For the next six days you are to eat bread prepared without yeast, and on the seventh day assemble to worship the LORD your God, and do no work on that day.

The Feast of Weeks

Deu 16:9 "Count seven weeks from the time that you begin to harvest the grain,

Deu 16:10 and then celebrate the Harvest Festival, to honor the LORD your God, by bringing him a freewill offering in proportion to the blessing he has given you.

Deu 16:11 Be joyful in the LORD's presence, together with your children, your servants, and the Levites, foreigners, orphans, and widows who live in your towns. Do this at the one place of worship.

Deu 16:12 Be sure that you obey these commands; do not forget that you were slaves in Egypt.

The Feast of Booths

Deu 16:13 "After you have threshed all your grain and pressed all your grapes, celebrate the Festival of Shelters for seven days.

Deu 16:14 Enjoy it with your children, your servants, and the Levites, foreigners, orphans, and widows who live in your towns.

Deu 16:15 Honor the LORD your God by celebrating this festival for seven days at the one place of worship. Be joyful, because the LORD has blessed your harvest and your work.

Deu 16:16 "All the men of your nation are to come to worship the LORD three times a year at the one place of worship: at Passover, Harvest Festival, and the Festival of Shelters. Each man is to bring a gift

Deu 16:17 as he is able, in proportion to the blessings that the LORD your God has given him.

Justice

Deu 16:18 "Appoint judges and other officials in every town that the LORD your God gives you. These men are to judge the people impartially.

Deu 16:19 They are not to be unjust or show partiality in their judgments; and they are not to accept bribes, for gifts blind the eyes even of wise and honest men, and cause them to give wrong decisions.

Deu 16:20 Always be fair and just, so that you will occupy the land that the LORD your God is giving you and so that you will continue to live there.

Forbidden Forms of Worship

Deu 16:21 "When you make an altar for the LORD your God, do not put beside it a wooden symbol of the goddess Asherah.

Deu 16:22 And do not set up any stone pillar for idol worship; the LORD hates them.

Deuteronomy 16:1-22

Deuteronomy 16 - The Three Major Feasts

A. The observance of Passover.

1. (1-2) The sacrifice of the Passover.

Observe the month of Abib, and keep the Passover to the LORD your God, for in the month of Abib the LORD your God brought you out of Egypt by night. Therefore you shall sacrifice the Passover to the LORD your God, from the flock and the herd, in the place where the LORD chooses to put His name.

- a. **You shall sacrifice the Passover to the LORD... in the place where the LORD chooses to put His name:** At the first Passover, each family in Israel sacrificed the Passover lamb at their home. But when Israel came into the Promised Land, the sacrifice was to be made at the tabernacle (and later, the temple).
 - b. **For in the month of Abib the LORD your God brought you out of Egypt by night:** Exodus 12 describes the first Passover, when Israel was delivered from Egypt, and God sent His judgment upon the firstborn of Egypt. God passed over the homes which obediently sacrificed the Passover lamb and applied its blood to the door posts of the home.
 - c. **Keep the Passover to the LORD:** Prophetically, the feast of **Passover** clearly presents Jesus as our Passover (1Co 5:7), the Lamb of God who was sacrificed, and whose blood was received and applied, so the wrath of God would pass over us.
2. (3-4) *The Feast of Unleavened Bread, associated with Passover.*
- You shall eat no leavened bread with it; seven days you shall eat unleavened bread with it, that is, the bread of affliction (for you came out of the land of Egypt in haste), that you may remember the day in which you came out of the land of Egypt all the days of your life. And no leaven shall be seen among you in all your territory for seven days, nor shall any of the**

meat which you sacrifice the first day at twilight remain overnight until morning.

a. **For you came out of the land of Egypt in haste:**

For the first Passover, the unleavened bread was a practical necessity; they left Egypt in such a hurry there was no time to allow for the dough to rise.

b. **And no leaven shall be seen among you in all your territory for seven days:** But the Feast of Unleavened Bread, following Passover, continued to be important. Leaven was a picture of sin and corruption, because of the way a little leaven would influence a whole lump of dough, and also because of the way leaven would “puff up” the lump - even as pride and sin makes us “puffed up.”

i. Significantly, God called them to walk *unleavened* after their initial deliverance from Egypt; symbolically, they were being called to a pure walk with the LORD.

ii. Some suggest there was also a health aspect in getting rid of all the leaven; that since they used a piece of dough from the previous batch to make the bread for that day, and did so repeatedly, that harmful bacteria could take hold in the dough - so it was good to remove all leaven and start all over at least once a year.

iii. The purity of the feast of Unleavened Bread followed upon the blood-deliverance of Passover; we can only walk in purity before the LORD after we have had the blood-deliverance at the cross.

c. **You shall eat no leavened bread with it:**

Prophetically, the feast of Unleavened Bread relates to the time of Jesus’ burial, after His perfect, sinless sacrifice on the cross, during which He was received by God the Father as holy and complete (the *Holy One* who

would not see corruption, Act 2:27), perfectly accomplishing our salvation.

i. We may regard the burial (or actually, entombment) of Jesus as a small thing in God's redemptive plan; but it was an essential part of Paul's gospel: *For I delivered to you first of all that which I also received: That Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures, and that He was buried, and that He rose again the third day according to the Scriptures* (1Co 15:3-4).

3. (5-8) Regulations for Passover.

You may not sacrifice the Passover within any of your gates which the LORD your God gives you; but at the place where the LORD your God chooses to make His name abide, there you shall sacrifice the Passover at twilight, at the going down of the sun, at the time you came out of Egypt. And you shall roast and eat it in the place which the LORD your God chooses, and in the morning you shall turn and go to your tents. Six days you shall eat unleavened bread, and on the seventh day there shall be a sacred assembly to the LORD your God. You shall do no work on it.

B. The observance of the Feast of Weeks (Pentecost).

1. (9-10) The Feast of Weeks.

You shall count seven weeks for yourself; begin to count the seven weeks from the time you begin to put the sickle to the grain. Then you shall keep the Feast of Weeks to the LORD your God with the tribute of a freewill offering from your hand, which you shall give as the LORD your God blesses you.

a. **From the time you begin to put the sickle to the grain:** The Feast of Weeks (or Pentecost) was a feast associated with the joy of harvest, during which Israelites

brought a **freewill offering** unto the LORD, as a demonstration of the thanks in their heart.

2. (11-12) *The joy of Pentecost.*

You shall rejoice before the LORD your God, you and your son and your daughter, your male servant and your female servant, the Levite who is within your gates, the stranger and the fatherless and the widow who are among you, at the place where the LORD your God chooses to make His name abide. And you shall remember that you were a slave in Egypt, and you shall be careful to observe these statutes.

a. **You shall rejoice:** There was no ritual of sacrifice commanded at Pentecost. Instead, it was a time of joyful thanksgiving for the harvest, and heart-response to God.

b. **You shall remember:** The joy of Pentecost was intensified by remembering the bondage Israel had escaped.

c. **And you shall remember that you were a slave in Egypt, and you shall be careful to observe these statutes:** Lev 23:15-21 describes how, at the feast of Pentecost, Israel was to celebrate by bringing a **new grain offering to the LORD** and by waving two loaves of *leavened* bread unto the LORD. Prophetically, this is a powerful picture of the work of God in the New Covenant, fulfilled at the Day of Pentecost in Acts 2.

i. No atoning sacrifice was necessary because the price had already been paid by Jesus.

ii. There was a great harvest unto God, and great thanksgiving for that harvest.

iii. The response to God on the day of Pentecost was not done out of obligation to a particular law. It was the joyful heart-response of God's people unto Him.

iv. The church, founded on the day of Pentecost, would include the “leavened bread” of the Gentiles, waved as holy before God - made holy by the work of Jesus the Messiah.

C. The observance of the Feast of Tabernacles.

1. (13-15) How to observe the Feast of Tabernacles.

You shall observe the Feast of Tabernacles seven days, when you have gathered from your threshing floor and from your winepress. And you shall rejoice in your feast, you and your son and your daughter, your male servant and your female servant and the Levite, the stranger and the fatherless and the widow, who are within your gates. Seven days you shall keep a sacred feast to the LORD your God in the place which the LORD chooses, because the LORD your God will bless you in all your produce and in all the work of your hands, so that you surely rejoice.

a. **You shall observe the Feast of Tabernacles seven days:** This was to happen on the fifteenth day of the Jewish month Tishri (on the Jewish ceremonial calendar). The Feast of Tabernacles was a time to rejoice in God’s deliverance and provision for Israel during the time of wilderness wandering; a time when having come into the Promised Land, looking back with gratitude on all God had done to deliver and provide in the tough times of the wilderness.

i. Lev 23:39 says of the Feast of Tabernacles, *on the first day there shall be a sabbath-rest, and on the eighth day a sabbath rest.* The Feast of Tabernacles began and ended in rest; it was all about celebration and rest and refreshment, remembering what God had done.

b. **Your manservant and your maidservant:** We see here also the great *social* good God intended in the Sabbath and in the Feasts; in other ancient cultures, there was no day off, and there were no holidays. Here, God *commands* both holidays and “vacation days” - all centered on Him!

c. **Observe the Feast of Tabernacles:** Prophetically, the feast of **Tabernacles** speaks of the millennial rest of comfort of God for Israel and all of God’s people; it is all about peace and rest, from beginning to end.

i. Tabernacles is specifically said to be celebrated during the millennium (Zec 14:16-19).

2. (16-17) *The command to observe each of these three feasts.*

Three times a year all your males shall appear before the LORD your God in the place which He chooses: at the Feast of Unleavened Bread, at the Feast of Weeks, and at the Feast of Tabernacles; and they shall not appear before the LORD empty-handed. Every man shall give as he is able, according to the blessing of the LORD your God which He has given you.

a. **Three times a year all your males shall appear before the LORD your God in the place which He chooses:** These were only three (four, actually, counting the feast of unleavened bread as a separate feast) of the seven feasts of Israel. Not mentioned in this chapter are the feasts of trumpets, of firstfruits, and of the Day of Atonement.

b. **All your males:** Yet, the feasts mentioned in this chapter were the most important feasts in Israel - and every Jewish man, to the best of His ability, was to go to the place of the tabernacle (or later, the temple) and celebrate this feast with the whole nation of Israel.

i. Jesus was obedient to this command; He made the trip from Galilee to Jerusalem to be at these feasts (Luk 2:41, Joh 7:2; Joh 7:10).

3. (18-20) The appointment of judges and officers.

You shall appoint judges and officers in all your gates, which the LORD your God gives you, according to your tribes, and they shall judge the people with just judgment. You shall not pervert justice; you shall not show partiality, nor take a bribe, for a bribe blinds the eyes of the wise and twists the words of the righteous. You shall follow what is altogether just, that you may live and inherit the land which the LORD your God is giving you.

a. **You shall appoint judges and officers in all your gates:** God knew the importance of just judges and officials to a nation. Therefore, God commanded that they **shall not pervert justice... nor show partiality... nor take a bribe**; instead, they were to **follow what is altogether just**. A judge has the responsibility to do *justice*.

4. (21-22) Prohibition of idol trees and pillars.

You shall not plant for yourself any tree, as a wooden image, near the altar which you build for yourself to the LORD your God. You shall not set up a sacred pillar, which the LORD your God hates.

a. **You shall not plant for yourself any tree, as a wooden image, near the altar:** Such sacred totems were common among the Canaanites. Israel might have been tempted to be “seeker sensitive” and add such items to their worship of the God of Israel. He wanted none of it. God says of such thing, **which the LORD your God hates**.

Deu 17:1 "Do not sacrifice to the LORD your God cattle or sheep that have any defects; the LORD hates this.

Deu 17:2 "Suppose you hear that in one of your towns some men or women have sinned against the LORD and broken his covenant

Deu 17:3 by worshiping and serving other gods or the sun or the moon or the stars, contrary to the LORD's command.

Deu 17:4 If you hear such a report, then investigate it thoroughly. If it is true that this evil thing has happened in Israel,

Deu 17:5 then take them outside the town and stone them to death.

Deu 17:6 However, they may be put to death only if two or more witnesses testify against them; they are not to be put to death if there is only one witness.

Deu 17:7 The witnesses are to throw the first stones, and then the rest of the people are to stone them; in this way you will get rid of this evil.

Legal Decisions by Priests and Judges

Deu 17:8 "It may be that some cases will be too difficult for the local judges to decide, such as certain cases of property rights or of bodily injury or those cases that involve a distinction between murder and manslaughter. When this happens, go to the one place of worship chosen by the LORD your God,

Deu 17:9 and present your case to the levitical priests and to the judge who is in office at that time, and let them decide the case.

Deu 17:10 They will give their decision, and you are to do exactly as they tell you.

Deu 17:11 Accept their verdict and follow their instructions in every detail.

Deu 17:12 Anyone who dares to disobey either the judge or the priest on duty is to be put to death; in this way you will remove this evil from Israel.

Deu 17:13 Then everyone will hear of it and be afraid, and no one else will dare to act in such a way.

Laws Concerning Israel's Kings

Deu 17:14 "After you have taken possession of the land that the LORD your God is going to give you and have settled there, then you will decide you need a king like all the nations around you.

Deu 17:15 Be sure that the man you choose to be king is the one whom the LORD has chosen. He must be one of your own people; do not make a foreigner your king.

Deu 17:16 The king is not to have a large number of horses for his army, and he is not to send people to Egypt to buy horses, because the LORD has said that his people are never to return there.

Deu 17:17 The king is not to have many wives, because this would make him turn away from the LORD; and he is not to make himself rich with silver and gold.

Deu 17:18 When he becomes king, he is to have a copy of the book of God's laws and teachings made from the original copy kept by the levitical priests.

Deu 17:19 He is to keep this book near him and read from it all his life, so that he will learn to honor the LORD and to obey faithfully everything that is commanded in it.

Deu 17:20 This will keep him from thinking that he is better than other Israelites and from disobeying the LORD's commands in any way. Then he will reign for many years, and his descendants will rule Israel for many generations.

Deuteronomy 17:1-20

Deuteronomy 17 - Laws Pertaining to the Rulers of Israel

A. Laws regarding justice and courts.

1. (1-5) Religious offenses.

You shall not sacrifice to the LORD your God a bull or sheep which has any blemish or defect, for that is an abomination to the LORD your God. If there is found among you, within any of your gates which the LORD your God gives you, a man or a woman who has been wicked in the sight of the LORD your God, in transgressing His covenant, who has gone and served other gods and worshiped them, either the sun or moon or any of the host of heaven, which I have not commanded, and it is told you, and you hear of it, then you shall inquire diligently. And if it is indeed true and certain that such an abomination has been committed in Israel, then you shall bring out to your gates that man or woman who has committed that wicked thing, and shall stone to death that man or woman with stones.

a. **You shall not:** This section, much like Exodus 21-23, is meant to give instructions to the judges of Israel in how to administrate justice for the nation. It is case law, upon which legal precedents for future cases may be understood.

b. **Which has any blemish or defect, for that is an abomination to the LORD your God:** God commanded that no one can bring to Him a sacrifice which has **any blemish or defect, for that is an abomination to the LORD.** God did not recognize the giving of cast-off, worthless items, as a true sacrifice unto Him. We have a tendency to always want to give God second best - if not third or fourth best. But God will not receive such a sacrifice.

i. There are countless jokes illustrating this point. One common one describes a farmer whose cow gave birth to twins, and he swore he would give one of the calves to God. He didn't decide which one to give to God, until one day one of the calves died. He said to his wife: "Guess what? God's calf died today!"

ii. Israel did not always live up to this standard: *And when you offer the blind as a sacrifice, is it not evil? And when you offer the lame and sick, is it not evil? Offer it then to your governor! Would he be pleased with you? Would he accept you favorably?" Says the LORD of hosts. (Mal 1:8)*

iii. David powerfully illustrated the idea behind this commandment when he refused to accept the threshing floor of Araunah as a gift, which David was going to give to the LORD as the place to build the temple. David said, *nor will I offer burnt offerings to the LORD my God with that which costs me nothing (2Sa 24:24)*. David understood that if it didn't cost something, it wasn't a sacrifice.

c. **Who has gone and served other gods and worshiped them:** Judges are also commanded to make sure that any who have gone after idolatry are to be investigated, and if found to be guilty, are to be executed.

2. (6-7) *The standard of evidence in capital crimes.*

Whoever is deserving of death shall be put to death on the testimony of two or three witnesses; he shall not be put to death on the testimony of one witness. The hands of the witnesses shall be the first against him to put him to death, and afterward the hands of all the people. So you shall put away the evil from among you.

a. **Whoever is deserving of death shall be put to death on the testimony of two or three witnesses:**

There was never to be capital punishment unless there was evidence from at least two independent, unimpeachable sources.

i. We may comfort ourselves that we would never judge someone guilty of murder so quickly, without proper evidence. Yet many will murder someone's reputation in their own mind or in the minds of others with *no* witnesses, much less one.

ii. God is concerned about the murder of reputation, as well as physical murder, and commands that one should *not receive an accusation against an elder except from two or three witnesses* (1Ti 5:19) - the same standard as for proving murder.

iii. Remember 1Ti 5:19 does not say "except from two or three gossips"; it says *except from two or three witnesses*. If a matter is false, it does not become true because many people hear it or many people repeat it.

b. **The hands of the witnesses shall be the first against him to put him to death:** Additionally, the witnesses had to be so certain of what they saw, that they were willing to initiate the actual execution. This made certain that no one would be executed for a crime they did not commit.

i. This puts the words of Jesus regarding the woman taken in adultery in John 8 in perspective: *He who is without sin among you, let him throw a stone at her first* (Joh 8:7). Jesus asked for the official witness to step forward and identify themselves on record as having witnessed this act of adultery, yet was hypocritical enough to bring the woman and not the man.

c. **And afterward the hands of all the people:** The execution was a community event, in the sense that it was supported by the community. The whole village would know the justice of what was being done.

3. (8-13) *Provision made for higher courts.*

If a matter arises which is too hard for you to judge, between degrees of guilt for bloodshed, between one judgment or another, or between one punishment or another, matters of controversy within your gates, then you shall arise and go up to the place which the LORD your God chooses. And you shall come to the priests, the Levites, and to the judge *there* in those days, and inquire of them; they shall pronounce upon you the sentence of judgment. You shall do according to the sentence which they pronounce upon you in that place which the LORD chooses. And you shall be careful to do according to all that they order you. According to the sentence of the law in which they instruct you, according to the judgment which they tell you, you shall do; you shall not turn aside to the right hand or to the left from the sentence which they pronounce upon you. Now the man who acts presumptuously and will not heed the priest who stands to minister there before the LORD your God, or the judge, that man shall die. So you shall put away the evil from Israel. And all the people shall hear and fear, and no longer act presumptuously.

a. **If a matter arises which is too hard for you to judge:** God allowed for courts of appeal in Israel. These were higher courts where cases were taken beyond the local judges to **the priests, the Levites** - who were understood to be wiser judges because of their knowledge of God's Word

b. **Now the man who acts presumptuously and will not heed the priest... that man shall die:** The authority of the judges had to be respected, therefore contempt of court was a capital crime. God thought it essential that the courts and the judges be respected by the people of Israel.

B. Laws pertaining to kings.

1. (14-15) *God's indirect promise of a future king for Israel.*

When you come to the land which the LORD your God is giving you, and possess it and dwell in it, and say, "I will set a king over me like all the nations that are around me," you shall surely set a king over you whom the LORD your God chooses; one from among your brethren you shall set as king over you; you may not set a foreigner over you, who is not your brother.

a. **I will set a king over me like all the nations that are around me:** God looked forward - some 400 years forward - into Israel's future, to the time when they would demand a king. God warned them to **set a king over you whom the LORD your God chooses**, and that person had to be an Israelite and not a foreigner.

b. **I will set a king over me:** It is interesting to consider whether or not God wanted an earthly king over Israel. 1Sa 8:6-9, the record of Israel's demand for king, puts the request for a king in a negative light. One might ask if God really did want Israel to never have an earthly king, and if He wanted them to recognize Him alone as king.

i. It is a debatable issue; but consider that Israel's history without a king (the time of the book of Judges) was not a period of national glory. Perhaps we can say that God wanted Israel to have a king, but of *His* choosing, and at *His* timing. Saul is a perfect

example of a king out of God's will, chosen by the nation and at their timing; David is a perfect example of a king chosen by God and in His timing.

2. (16-17) Commands for the king.

But he shall not multiply horses for himself, nor cause the people to return to Egypt to multiply horses, for the LORD has said to you, "You shall not return that way again." Neither shall he multiply wives for himself, lest his heart turn away; nor shall he greatly multiply silver and gold for himself.

- a. **He shall not multiply horses for himself:** The future king of Israel must not put undue trust in military might.
- b. **Neither shall he multiply wives for himself:** The future king of Israel must not put undue emphasis on physical indulgence and personal status.
- c. **Nor shall he greatly multiply silver and gold for himself:** The future king of Israel must not put undue emphasis on personal wealth.
- d. **Lest His heart turn away:** Each of these issues is a matter of balance. The king had to have some military power, but not too much; one wife and certain comforts, but not too much; some personal wealth, but not too much. Such balances are often the hardest to keep.
 - i. Solomon was a notorious breaker of these commands. He had *forty thousand stalls of horses for his chariots* (1Ki 4:26), and *Solomon had horses imported from Egypt* (1Ki 10:28). He had *seven hundred wives, princesses, and three hundred concubines; and his wives turned away his heart* (1Ki 11:3). He *surpassed all the kings of the earth in riches* (1Ki 10:23).

ii. Yet, all along, we might see Solomon knowing the commands of Deuteronomy 17, yet deceiving himself by asking the self-justifying questions, "How much is 'multiply'? I can handle this. I haven't gone too far." It might seem self-evident that 700 wives and 300 concubines is multiplying wives to yourself, but one should never underestimate the ability of the human heart to deceive itself in such situations.

iii. Each of these three areas reflects the places where many modern Christian leaders fall: In regard to power, pleasure, or money. God's commands for leaders have not changed; and neither has the need to be on guard against the self-deception in these things which felled Solomon.

3. (18-20) *The king and the word of God.*

Also it shall be, when he sits on the throne of his kingdom, that he shall write for himself a copy of this law in a book, from *the one before the priests, the Levites*. And it shall be with him, and he shall read it all the days of his life, that he may learn to fear the LORD his God and be careful to observe all the words of this law and these statutes, that his heart may not be lifted above his brethren, that he may not turn aside from the commandment to the right hand or to the left, and that he may prolong *his* days in his kingdom, he and his children in the midst of Israel.

a. **He shall write for himself:** It is striking to think of the king of Israel, laboring over parchment with a pen, making a personal copy of the law of Israel. This shows how greatly God wanted the word of God to be on the hearts of His rulers; God wanted every king to also be a scribe.

i. "Incidentally, the phrase *a copy of this law* (18) appears incorrectly in the LXX as 'this second law', to

deuteronomion touto. It was this misunderstanding that gave rise to the English name Deuteronomy.” (Thompson)

b. **It shall be with him, and he shall read it all the days of his life:** The word of God was to be constant companion of the king of Israel, and something he read every day.

i. All need the word of God; but the greater our responsibilities, the greater our need to depend on the truth of God’s word.

c. **That he may learn to fear the LORD his God and be careful to observe all the words of this law:** Staying in the word of God was intended to build a reverence for God and a holy life in the king.

i. It is striking to consider that reading a book – the Great Book, the Bible – can keep a person from sin. We may not understand all the spiritual work behind the word of God, but staying in the word will keep one from sin. It has been well written in many Bibles: “This book will keep you from sin. Sin will keep you from this book.”

ii. Luther said he would rather live in hell with the Bible than to live in Paradise without the Bible.

d. **That his heart may not be lifted up:** Staying in the word of God would keep the king properly humble and help him to not think of himself as above those he ruled over.

i. “The Scriptures, diligently read and studied, are a powerful and probable means to keep him humble, because they show him that, though a king, he is subject to a higher Monarch, to whom he must give an account... sufficient to abate the pride of the

haughtiest person in the world, if he duly consider it."
(Poole)

Provision for Priests and Levites

Deu 18:1 "The priestly tribe of Levi is not to receive any share of land in Israel; instead, they are to live on the offerings and other sacrifices given to the LORD.

Deu 18:2 They are to own no land, as the other tribes do; their share is the privilege of being the LORD's priests, as the LORD has promised.

Deu 18:3 "Whenever cattle or sheep are sacrificed, the priests are to be given the shoulder, the jaw, and the stomach.

Deu 18:4 They are to receive the first share of the grain, wine, olive oil, and wool.

Deu 18:5 The LORD chose from all your tribes the tribe of Levi to serve him as priests forever.

Deu 18:6 "Any Levite who wants to may come from any town in Israel to the one place of worship

Deu 18:7 and may serve there as a priest of the LORD his God, like the other Levites who are serving there.

Deu 18:8 He is to receive the same amount of food as the other priests, and he may keep whatever his family sends him.

Abominable Practices

Deu 18:9 "When you come into the land that the LORD your God is giving you, don't follow the disgusting practices of the nations that are there.

Deu 18:10 Don't sacrifice your children in the fires on your altars; and don't let your people practice divination or look for omens or use spells

Deu 18:11 or charms, and don't let them consult the spirits of the dead.

Deu 18:12 The LORD your God hates people who do these disgusting things, and that is why he is driving those nations out of the land as you advance.

Deu 18:13 Be completely faithful to the LORD."

Deu 18:14 Then Moses said, "In the land you are about to occupy, people follow the advice of those who practice divination and look for omens, but the LORD your God does not allow you to do this.

A New Prophet like Moses

Deu 18:15 Instead, he will send you a prophet like me from among your own people, and you are to obey him.

Deu 18:16 "On the day that you were gathered at Mount Sinai, you begged not to hear the LORD speak again or to see his fiery presence any more, because you were afraid you would die.

Deu 18:17 So the LORD said to me, 'They have made a wise request.

Deu 18:18 I will send them a prophet like you from among their own people; I will tell him what to say, and he will tell the people everything I command.

Deu 18:19 He will speak in my name, and I will punish anyone who refuses to obey him.

Deu 18:20 But if any prophet dares to speak a message in my name when I did not command him to do so, he must die for it, and so must any prophet who speaks in the name of other gods.'

Deu 18:21 "You may wonder how you can tell when a prophet's message does not come from the LORD.

Deu 18:22 If a prophet speaks in the name of the LORD and what he says does not come true, then it is not the

LORD's message. That prophet has spoken on his own authority, and you are not to fear him.

Deuteronomy 18:1-22

Deuteronomy 18 - Priests and Prophets

A. The provision for priests and Levites.

1. (1-2) The inheritance of the Levites.

The priests, the Levites; all the tribe of Levi; shall have no part nor inheritance with Israel; they shall eat the offerings of the LORD made by fire, and His portion. Therefore they shall have no inheritance among their brethren; the LORD is their inheritance, as He said to them.

a. **The priests, the Levites; all the tribe of Levi; shall have no part nor inheritance with Israel:** The Levites - those of the tribe of Levi, who were the paid ministers for the nation of Israel - **shall have no inheritance among their brethren.** In other words, they were not to have allotted portions of land for their own possession.

b. **They shall eat the offerings of the LORD made by fire, and His portion:** Instead, the Levites were to be supported by the gifts and offerings of God's people. The Levites were permitted to receive at least a portion of most animals sacrificed to the LORD, and thus were provided with meat for food.

2. (3-5) The specific portions of the sacrificial animal set apart to the Levites.

And this shall be the priest's due from the people, from those who offer a sacrifice, whether it is bull or sheep: they shall give to the priest the shoulder, the cheeks, and the stomach. The firstfruits of your grain and your new wine and your oil, and the first of the

fleece of your sheep, you shall give him. For the LORD your God has chosen him out of all your tribes to stand to minister in the name of the LORD, him and his sons forever.

- a. **And this shall be the priest's due from the people, from those who offer a sacrifice:** From a typical sacrifice, the priests received the shoulder, the cheeks, and the stomach. The rest of the animal would either be burnt before the LORD or returned to the one bringing the sacrifice, so he could enjoy his own fellowship meal with the LORD.
- b. **Your grain and your new wine and your oil and the first of the fleece of your sheep:** The priests also received these offerings of firstfruits from the people.

3. (6-8) *All the Levites had equal rights to the offerings.*

So if a Levite comes from any of your gates, from where he dwells among all Israel, and comes with all the desire of his mind to the place which the LORD chooses, then he may serve in the name of the LORD his God as all his brethren the Levites do, who stand there before the LORD. They shall have equal portions to eat, besides what comes from the sale of his inheritance.

B. Prescriptions for prophets.

1. (9-11) *The command to reject all the occult practices of the Canaanites.*

When you come into the land which the LORD your God is giving you, you shall not learn to follow the abominations of those nations. There shall not be found among you anyone who makes his son or his daughter pass through the fire, or one who practices witchcraft, or a soothsayer, or one who interprets

omens, or a sorcerer, or one who conjures spells, or a medium, or a spiritist, or one who calls up the dead.

- a. **You shall not learn:** God knows that many people have a natural curiosity regarding the occult, and that curiosity often leads them to gain knowledge God commands them to leave alone.
- b. **Anyone who makes his son or his daughter to pass through the fire:** This refers to the debased worship of the Canaanite god Molech, to whom children were sacrificed by burning.
- c. **Or one who practices witchcraft:** The word **witchcraft** here seems to be a broad word, describing a variety of occult activities. Basically, anything that makes contact with the demonic or dark spiritual world.
 - i. Thompson on **practices witchcraft:** "A variety of devices were in use in various lands, but all were designed to discern the will of the gods. The same word in Eze 21:21 refers to the practice of whirling arrows in a quiver and deciding the answer to the question by the first arrow thrown out."
 - ii. There is a modern revival of witchcraft, or Wicca, and many people claim that "white" witchcraft (as opposed to "black" witchcraft) is a use of spiritual powers for good, as well as being a more feminist, ecology-friendly understanding of god and spirituality. But whether a witch claims to be "white" or "black," they are still using occultic powers.
 - iii. Some claim that white, or "right hand path" witches are in the majority today. They worship elements and nature deities, the "Mother Goddess," Gaia, Ashtarte, Isis, Osiris, and a host of other names for the Goddess. Characteristically they are active in "Saving the earth" activities, due to the fact that they

are pantheists (those who believe the divine life force is in everything: ever see the bumper sticker picturing a globe bearing the legend "Love Your Mother"?). They deny the existence of Satan, calling him an invention of the Christian Church. They claim to use their powers (and they do have powers) for good: sending healing energies to the sick, affirmations which bring prosperity, and loudly proclaiming their creed, "As it harm none, do as thou wilt." It's ironic how their creed sounds so similar to that of a man who referred to himself as "The Beast, 666" - Satanist Aleister Crowley, who wrote, "Do as thou wilt shall be the whole of the Law."

iv. Of course, there are black, or "left hand path," witches. These are witches who originally were into white witchcraft and got hungry for more power. As their teachers noticed this power lust, they were taken aside and told, "You are now ready to go after the higher power, and there is only one way to achieve this power. Satan is its source." Thus, comes the white witch's abrupt surprise: either give up your witchly ambitions, or go for the higher power. The bottom line is that the power behind all kinds of witchcraft is Satan. He is the author of all deception, and all rebellion. To practice or approve of witchcraft is to serve Satan.

v. And this Satanic power kills. Ronald Baker was a 21-year-old student at UCLA, and was found stabbed to death at the mouth of a railroad tunnel in the rocky hills above Chatsworth Park. Police first thought the mangled body was of a transient hit by a train; but they then found an occult connection in Baker's death. The killing took place on the night of the summer solstice, and the tunnel near the park is known to police as a gathering place for devotees of

the occult. Baker was involved with Wicca (described as "benevolent witchcraft"), often wore a pentagram pendant, and belonged to a UCLA metaphysical group known as Mystic Circle (from a July 1990 news article).

vi. Some who call themselves Christians are buying into this deception. Take the case of a woman who calls herself Starhawk, who is a practitioner of *Wicca* - a witch. She first learned about *Wicca* at an anthropology course at UCLA when she was 17, and she took the name Starhawk in 1975 when it came to her in a dream. After a master's degree in psychology, she began teaching at universities. She is a licensed minister of the Covenant of the Goddess and performs marriages and other ceremonies. She views the earth as a sensitive, living organism which she calls "the Goddess." Mary Elizabeth Moore of the Claremont School of Theology said of Starhawk: "Many Christians, especially women and others who are trying to reclaim creation-centered theology, find her work to be compatible with, or at least adaptable to, Christian teaching." Starhawk was scheduled to speak at the First Christian Church in Santa Monica on a Friday evening (from a June, 1993 news article).

d. **Or a soothsayer:** This has reference to astrological-type divination, predicting the future or seeking guidance through the stars, planets, clouds, or weather.

i. Kalland says that the **soothsayer**: "Is... predicting the future by means of physical signs (astrology)." Thompson points out "it seems to refer to divination by reading clouds, or from a root which occurs in Arabic meaning 'to make unusual noises', 'croon', 'hum', in which case it may refer to some kind of incantation."

ii. Even though Astrology is unscientific - it is based on the supposition that the sun circles the earth, and the positions of the planets and stars have shifted, and are never consistently uniform; therefore, the houses of the Zodiac have shifted - despite all that, thirty-two million Americans believe in Astrology! There are 10,000 full time and 200,000 part time astrologers in America. Three out of four American newspapers carry a horoscope column.

iii. So where does the real “power” of astrology come from? From what most astrologers call “intuition” - but is really psychic knowledge and ability. Astrology is idolatry and stems from the demonic. It leads people away from trusting in God and encourages them to put trust in what God created. And isn’t that Satan’s goal: To replace confidence in God with a dependence on anything else?

iv. Therefore, the Bible clearly forbids us to participate in astrology, which includes reading your horoscope, studying your sign, and computing a natal chart. It is an occult art, meaning that it involves “knowledge of hidden things”, seeking spiritual knowledge apart from God’s revelation. It is a foundational art, which means it is the building block for all occultists. It is studied by witches and magicians alike. Every Christian should renounce any involvement they have ever had with astrology!

e. **Or one who interprets omens:** The word comes from the root “to hiss” or “to whisper” and refers to psychics and fortune-tellers who use “aids” other than naturally created things to gain knowledge, tell the future, and cast spells.

i. Today, these people are the tarot card readers, crystal ball seers, tea-leaf readers, palm readers,

Ouija board users, and the like. A Christian has *no business* participating or approving of any of these practices, because either they are money-grubbing frauds (at best!), or worse, they gain their knowledge from satanic, demonic, spiritual sources.

ii. This is why it is dangerous for people - especially kids - to break out the Ouija board, or do a little séance, or little "dark" magic tricks. They are tapping into a source of spiritual power that is real - yet evil, and unspeakably dangerous. Many, many people have been ruined on the rocks of "innocent" occult or fortune telling games, and the fact that there is a *real* power behind those things should make us all the more concerned.

iii. There is a demand for this kind of thing; why else would a homeless man in New York be arrested for stealing skulls from a Brooklyn cemetery and selling them for use in occult ceremonies? A skull can bring as much as \$4,000 (from an August, 1991 news article).

iv. It is worth noting that Satan or his demons cannot absolutely know the future; but they can reasonably predict the future based on their superior knowledge of people and circumstances or predict events that they can have a hand in shaping through their own demonic influence.

f. **Or a sorcerer:** This has reference to those who use drugs or potions to cast spells, gain spiritual knowledge, or enter into altered states of consciousness. Modern drug abuse easily falls into this category, and the use of drugs has a definite *occult* connection that the drug taker may not want but is exposed to nonetheless.

i. Clarke says of **sorcerer**: "Those who by means of drugs, herbs, perfumes, and so forth, pretended to bring certain celestial influences to their aid." Thompson adds, "derived from the root... 'to cut up', may denote one who cuts up herbs and brews them for magical purposes (*cf.* LXX *pharmaka*, drug). The term is used in Mic 5:12 for some such material as drugs or herbs used superstitiously to produce magical effects."

g. **Or one who conjures up spells:** This is literally, "A charmer of charms" and refers to those who cast spells or charms for good or evil upon others with spiritual powers apart from God.

i. It is a glorious thing to bless another in the name of the LORD; or even to pray to God against the evil of another person. But it is always and forever wrong to use demonic, dark, pagan, or occult powers to cast spells or charms.

h. **Or a medium:** The idea is of someone who "stands between" the physical world and the psychic world; they channel knowledge from the psychic world into the physical world.

i. Thompson notes that the **medium**: "Spoke from within a person (Lev 20:27) with a twittering voice (Isa 29:4). Those who practiced this art called up the departed from the realm of the dead, or rather, professed to do so."

ii. Those who practice such powers are really among us. In May of 1990, after a man died in the City of Industry, his corpse remained at the home of a spirit medium that had convinced his family that he could revive the man. Friday, LA County coroner's investigators picked up the decomposing body at the home of the family. The unidentified medium

apparently gave the corpse back after being unable to revive the deceased.

i. **Or a spiritist:** Literally, this word refers to the "knowing ones" - those who claim unique occult or psychic knowledge and powers - such as those on the many psychic hotlines that one can pay to call. Again, a Christian has *no business* participating or approving of any of these practices, because either they are money-grubbing frauds (at best!), or worse, they gain their knowledge from satanic, demonic, spiritual sources.

j. **Or one who calls up the dead:** This refers to the practice of necromancy, which is the conjuring up or the contacting of the dead.

i. This refers to "One who investigates, looks into, and seeks information from the dead." (Kalland) This is much on the increase in our culture; "The proportion of adults who say they have been in touch with the dead has risen from 27% to 42% during the past 11 years. Close to 20 million Americans now report mystical experiences." (McDowell, 1989)

2. (12-14) *Why rejection of all these occult actions is commanded.*

For all who do these things are an abomination to the LORD, and because of these abominations the LORD your God drives them out from before you. You shall be blameless before the LORD your God. For these nations which you will dispossess listened to soothsayers and diviners; but as for you, the LORD your God has not appointed such for you.

a. **For all who do these things are an abomination to the LORD:** God did not take these occult actions lightly then, nor does He now. It is consorting with the

power of darkness, and always to be rejected by Christians.

- i. Our culture is becoming more and more accepting of these occult themes and practices, while it is becoming more and more intolerant of Biblical Christianity. In 1991, a ninth grade Junior High Student in Dickson, Tennessee, sued the school board because his teacher wouldn't accept a research paper written on the life of Jesus. Students were allowed to write on topics such as the occult, reincarnation and spiritualism, and the teacher originally only said that the topics must be "decent." The student was given a zero on her paper when the topic was declared unacceptable (from an August, 1991 news report).
 - ii. "It may be pertinent to comment that in our own day, when spiritualism, astrology, teacup reading and the like are widely practiced, these injunctions given to ancient Israel have a particular relevance. Not only is it impossible to discover the future by such practices, but the practices themselves are forbidden by God to men who call themselves members of the covenant family." (Thompson)
- b. **Because of these abominations the LORD your God drives them out from before you:** God's judgment was upon the Canaanites because of these occult practices, and if Israel took up the same occult practices, they could also expect the judgment of God.
- i. Yes, the Canaanites were sex-worshippers (in their service of the goddess Ashtaroth); and yes, they were money and success worshippers (in their service of the god Baal). But other peoples given over to sex and greed haven't been judged as severely. What made the Canaanites particularly ripe for judgment

was their occult practices, practices the people of God were strictly forbidden to imitate.

c. **You shall be blameless:** more than being a general call to a holy walk, this is a solemn warning to keep from *any* involvement with these detestable practices of the occult. **The LORD your God has not appointed such for you!**

i. We are to be *blameless* in regard to such things, even as the Ephesian Christians, who destroyed all things that marked the occult in their lives (Act 19:19-20). This is why it is dangerous for people to seek or approve of the occult, even if they don't really believe it - even if they just kind of think it is "cool."

ii. For example, rock singer Ozzy Osbourne says that his satanic image is all an act. "We wrote a couple of songs about black magic, so what? I hammed it up, but I'm not the devil. I don't put curses on people." But in the same interview, Osbourne refers to "the him," who is a "malevolent voice in his head that transmits destructive and self-loathing messages." Osbourne said of this voice inside him, "He's there all the time... I've always had a haunted head." "Innocent" involvement with the occult didn't protect him. Satan doesn't really care if you are a true believer in him or not; just as long as he has you.

3. (15-19) *The promise of a true Prophet to come.*

The LORD your God will raise up for you a Prophet like me from your midst, from your brethren. Him you shall hear, according to all you desired of the LORD your God in Horeb in the day of the assembly, saying, "Let me not hear again the voice of the LORD my God, nor let me see this great fire anymore, lest I die." And the LORD said to me: "What they have spoken is

good. I will raise up for them a Prophet like you from among their brethren, and will put My words in His mouth, and He shall speak to them all that I command Him. And it shall be that whoever will not hear My words, which He speaks in My name, I will require it of him.”

- a. **The LORD your God will raise up for you a Prophet like me:** Moses, by inspiration of the Holy Spirit, promised a prophet to come; a prophet that would first be **like me** - that is, like Moses.
- b. **From your midst, from your brethren:** Like Moses, this Prophet would be from the midst of Israel. This not only meant that He would be an Israelite, but that He would be a “man of the people” - He would be one of them.
- c. **Him you shall hear:** Like Moses, this Prophet would command the attention of the nation. This means both that Israel *should* listen to this Prophet, and that they *would* listen to this Prophet.
- d. **According to all you desired of the LORD your God in Horeb:** Like Moses, this Prophet would be a mediator, representing God to the people, and representing the people before God.
- e. **Will put My words in His mouth:** Like Moses, this Prophet would speak God’s Word.
- f. **I will require it of him:** Like Moses, this Prophet’s message would only be rejected at a great penalty.
- g. **I will raise up for them a Prophet:** People looked for this Prophet in Jesus’ day (Joh 6:14; Joh 7:40) and some thought that John the Baptist might be this Prophet (Joh 1:19-21). But the New Testament plainly tells us that Jesus is this Prophet (Act 3:19-26, Act 7:37).

4. (20-22) *The penalty for a false prophet.*

"But the prophet who presumes to speak a word in My name, which I have not commanded him to speak, or who speaks in the name of other gods, that prophet shall die." And if you say in your heart, "How shall we know the word which the LORD has not spoken?"; when a prophet speaks in the name of the LORD, if the thing does not happen or come to pass, that is the thing which the LORD has not spoken; the prophet has spoken it presumptuously; you shall not be afraid of him.

- a. **But the prophet who presumes to speak a word in My name:** There are those who would **presume to speak a word** in God's name. Therefore we must always, always, guard against *presumption* when we say, "The LORD told me."
 - i. "The difference was that, whereas the true prophet spoke for God, the false prophet spoke presumptuously, *i.e.* he blurted out personal opinions for which there was no backing from Yahweh." (Thompson)
- b. **Which I have not commanded him to speak:** Some may genuinely hear from the LORD, but it is not a word that He has **commanded him to speak**. Just because God tells us something doesn't mean we should tell others.
- c. **Or speaks in the name of other gods:** Obviously, those who presumed to "prophecy" in the name of Baal or Ashtoreth, or any number of the other false gods of the Canaanites were false prophets.
- d. **That prophet shall die:** Simply stated, the penalty for false prophets was death. Presumptuous speaking in the name of the LORD, disobedient speaking in the name

of the LORD, and speaking in the name of false gods was simply never to be tolerated in Israel.

e. **How shall we know:** It is easy to tell if a prophet speaks in the name of Baal or Ashtoreth; but how can one know if a prophet speaking in the name of the LORD is speaking presumptuously or disobediently? Simply by their accuracy.

f. **If the thing does not happen or come to pass, that is the thing which the LORD has not spoken:** If a prophet says, "Thus says the LORD," claiming that something will happen, and it does not happen, then that prophet must be held accountable for that false prophecy - and we are no longer to regard that person as a prophet.

i. Not too long ago there was a great emphasis on the "prophets" in some Christian circles, and many would prophesy that something would happen - and it did not. However, those people excused their false prophesies by saying they were "learning" and "experimenting" and "under grace," therefore, we should not regard them as false prophets.

ii. While it is true that one may need to learn how to flow in the gifts of the Holy Spirit, no one should say something is from God unless they are assured that it is - and if they are wrong, then their own discernment and ability to hear from God are rightly called into question.

iii. Besides, if prophets were held to this standard under the Old Covenant, are we to have a lesser standard under the New Covenant? Is there more of an outpouring of the Holy Spirit now, or less? Under the New Covenant, are we more intimately guided by God, or less? It is true we are under grace, so we no longer stone false prophets - yet, we shouldn't

respect them or give them the title or position of "prophet" if they are false prophets.

iv. Instead, the New Testament says all prophecy - *any* time someone says, "The LORD told me" - all prophecy should be judged: *Let two or three prophets speak, and let the others judge* (1Co 14:29; see also 1Jn 4:1). It is far better to be humble and say, "I think the LORD may have said to me" instead of being too confident in one's ability to hear from the LORD.

v. Tom Stipe, in the foreword to *Counterfeit Revival*, speaks powerfully about the problem of false prophets in the church:

After only a couple of years, the prophets seemed to be speaking to just about everyone on just about everything. Hundreds of... members received the 'gift' of prophecy and began plying their trade among both leaders and parishioners. People began carrying around little notebooks filled with predictions that had been delivered to them by the prophets and seers. They flocked to the prophecy conferences that had begun to spring up everywhere. The notebook crowd would rush forward in hopes of being selected to receive more prophecies to add to their prophetic diaries.

Not long after 'prophecy du jour' became the primary source of direction, a trail of devastated believers began to line up outside our pastoral counseling offices. Young people promised teen success and stardom through prophecy were left picking up the pieces of their shattered hopes because God had apparently gone back on His promises. Leaders were deluged by angry church members who had received prophecies about the great ministries they would have

but had been frustrated by local church leaders who failed to recognize and ‘facilitate’ their ‘new anointing.’

After a steady diet of the prophetic, some people were rapidly becoming biblically illiterate, choosing a ‘dial-a-prophet’ style of Christian living rather than studying God’s Word. Many were left to continually live from one prophetic ‘fix’ to the next, their hope always in danger of failing because God’s voice was so specific in pronouncement, yet so elusive in fulfillment. Possessing a prophet’s phone number was like having a storehouse of treasured guidance. Little clutched notebooks replaced Bibles as the preferred reading material during church services.

vi. We must always guard against letting an emphasis on the “prophetic” overshadow a simple emphasis on God’s Word: *The prophet who has a dream, let him tell a dream; And he who has My word, let him speak My word faithfully. What is the chaff to the wheat?” says the LORD. (Jer 23:28)*

Laws Concerning Cities of Refuge

Deu 19:1 "After the LORD your God has destroyed the people whose land he is giving you and after you have taken their cities and houses and settled there,

Deu 19:2 (2-3) divide the territory into three parts, each with a city that can be easily reached. Then any of you that kill will be able to escape to one of them for protection.

Deu 19:4 If you accidentally kill someone who is not your enemy, you may escape to any of these cities and be safe.

Deu 19:5 For example, if two of you go into the forest together to cut wood and if, as one of you is chopping down a tree, the ax head comes off the handle and kills the other, you can run to one of those three cities and be safe.

Deu 19:6 If there were only one city, the distance to it might be too great, and the relative who is responsible for taking revenge for the killing might catch you and angrily kill an innocent person. After all, it was by accident that you killed someone who was not your enemy.

Deu 19:7 This is why I order you to set aside three cities.

Deu 19:8 "When the LORD your God enlarges your territory, as he told your ancestors he would, and gives you all the land he has promised,

Deu 19:9 then you are to select three more cities. (He will give you this land if you do everything that I command you today and if you love the LORD your God and live according to his teachings.)

Deu 19:10 Do this, so that innocent people will not die and so that you will not be guilty of putting them to death in the land that the LORD is giving you.

Deu 19:11 "But suppose you deliberately murder your enemy in cold blood and then escape to one of those cities for protection.

Deu 19:12 In that case, the leaders of your own town are to send for you and hand you over to the relative responsible for taking revenge for the murder, so that you may be put to death.

Deu 19:13 No mercy will be shown to you. Israel must rid itself of murderers, so that all will go well.

Property Boundaries

Deu 19:14 "Do not move your neighbor's property line, established long ago in the land that the LORD your God is giving you.

Laws Concerning Witnesses

Deu 19:15 "One witness is not enough to convict someone of a crime; at least two witnesses are necessary to prove that someone is guilty.

Deu 19:16 If any of you try to harm another by false accusations,

Deu 19:17 both of you are to go to the one place of worship and be judged by the priests and judges who are then in office.

Deu 19:18 The judges will investigate the case thoroughly; and if you have made a false accusation,

Deu 19:19 you are to receive the punishment the accused would have received. In this way your nation will get rid of this evil.

Deu 19:20 Then everyone else will hear what happened; they will be afraid, and no one will ever again do such an evil thing.

Deu 19:21 In such cases show no mercy; the punishment is to be a life for a life, an eye for an eye, a tooth for a tooth, a hand for a hand, and a foot for a foot.

Deuteronomy 19:1-21

Deuteronomy 19 - Concerning Criminal Law

A. Cities of refuge to be provided.

1. (1-3) Three special cities.

When the LORD your God has cut off the nations whose land the LORD your God is giving you, and you dispossess them and dwell in their cities and in their houses, you shall separate three cities for yourself in the midst of your land which the LORD your God is giving you to possess. You shall prepare roads for yourself, and divide into three parts the territory of your land which the LORD your God is giving you to inherit, that any manslayer may flee there.

a. You shall separate three cities for yourself in the midst of the land: God instructed Israel to make three cities of refuge in the Promised Land, and instructed

them to make them “centrally located” (**in the midst of the land**).

i. There are two other important passages dealing with the cities of refuge: Num 35:9-28 and Jos 20:7-8; a full understanding of the purpose and practice of the cities of refuge must be based on all of these passages.

ii. Moses had already established Bezer, Ramoth, and Golan as the cities of refuge on the east side of the Jordan River (Deu 4:41-43); this command is to establish three more cities of refuge on the west side of the Jordan.

b. **Prepare roads for yourself:** The people of Israel were to make good roads to each city of refuge, so the cities would be accessible.

i. “The Jews inform us that the roads to the cities of refuge were made very broad, thirty-two cubits; and even, so that there should be no impediments in the way; and were constantly kept in good repair.” (Clarke)

2. (4-7) *The purpose for the cities of refuge.*

And this is the case of the manslayer who flees there, that he may live: Whoever kills his neighbor unintentionally, not having hated him in time past; as when a man goes to the woods with his neighbor to cut timber, and his hand swings a stroke with the ax to cut down the tree, and the head slips from the handle and strikes his neighbor so that he dies; he shall flee to one of these cities and live; lest the avenger of blood, while his anger is hot, pursue the manslayer and overtake him, because the way is long, and kill him, though he was not deserving of death, since he had not hated the victim in time past.

Therefore I command you, saying, "You shall separate three cities for yourself."

a. **The case of the manslayer who flees there, that he may live:** The cities of refuge were for the protection of the person who killed another accidentally or in self-defense. In ancient Israel, when one was killed, it was the responsibility of the **avenger of blood** to make certain the murderer was punished.

i. This practice was based upon a correct understanding of Gen 9:6 : *Whoever shed's man's blood, by man his blood shall be shed; for in the image of God, God made man.*

b. **Lest the avenger of blood:** The **avenger of blood** was an appointed member of the family (the *goel*), designated to protect the honor and lives of the family. His interest would not be in gathering evidence, but in avenging the honor of the family - so, in the case of an accidental killing, the **manslayer** would need protection from the **avenger of blood**.

i. The case study given illustrates the point: Two men are working together, chopping down trees, when one man takes a swing of an ax and the ax head flies off, striking the other man in the head and instantly killing him. The surviving man had good reason to believe the avenger of blood from the dead man's family would track him down and kill him, believing the death was murder.

ii. Therefore, such a man could flee to a city of refuge - an appointed Levitical city, where he could stay, safe from the avenger of blood, until the issue was settled, and he could leave the city of refuge safely.

3. (8-10) *Appointment of additional cities of refuge.*

Now if the LORD your God enlarges your territory, as He swore to your fathers, and gives you the land which He promised to give to your fathers, and if you keep all these commandments and do them, which I command you today, to love the LORD your God and to walk always in His ways, then you shall add three more cities for yourself besides these three, lest innocent blood be shed in the midst of your land which the LORD your God is giving you as an inheritance, and *thus* guilt of bloodshed be upon you.

a. **Now if the LORD your God enlarges your territory:** As Israel expanded, there were to be more cities of refuge. If a city of refuge was too far to be readily reached by the manslayer, it did him no good - the avenger of blood would overtake him before he could reach the city of refuge.

b. **Then you shall add three more cities for yourself:** Ultimately, there were to be six cities of refuge; with three on each side of the Jordan River. Each of the three cities on either side would be positioned as north, central, and south.

i. Jos 20:7-8 tells of the actual cities chosen; they fulfilled the plan of being evenly distributed perfectly.

4. (11-13) *What to do with the guilty who seeks protection in the city of refuge: your eye shall not pity him.*

But if anyone hates his neighbor, lies in wait for him, rises against him and strikes him mortally, so that he dies, and he flees to one of these cities, then the elders of his city shall send and bring him from there, and deliver him over to the hand of the avenger of blood, that he may die. Your eye shall not pity him, but you shall put away the guilt of innocent blood from Israel, that it may go well with you.

- a. **But if anyone hates his neighbor, lies in wait for him, rises against him and strikes him mortally:** We can easily imagine that those truly guilty of murder would, at some time or another, seek protection in the city of refuge. So, whenever a manslayer came to seek protection at a city of refuge, **the elders of the city** were to judge his case and determine if he was truly worthy of protection.
- b. **Deliver him over to the hand of the avenger of blood:** If it was determined at this trial that the man was really guilty of murder, then he would be delivered **to the hand of the avenger of blood, that he may die.** There was no protection of the guilty within the walls of a city of refuge.
- c. **Put away the guilt of innocent blood from Israel, that it may go well with you:** God was just as concerned that the *guilty* be punished as He was that the *innocent* be protected (*lest innocent blood be shed in the midst of your land, Deu 19:10*).

5. *The cities of refuge as a picture of Jesus.*

- a. The Bible applies this picture of the city of refuge to the believer finding refuge in God on more than one occasion:
 - i. Psa 46:1 : *God is our refuge and strength, A very present help in trouble.* More than 15 other times, the Psalms speak of God as being our refuge.
 - ii. Heb 6:18 : *That by two immutable things, in which it is impossible for God to lie, we might have strong consolation, who have fled for refuge to lay hold of the hope set before us.*
- b. Both Jesus and the cities of refuge are *within easy reach* of the needy person; they were of no use unless someone could get to the place of refuge.

- c. Both Jesus and the cities of refuge are *open to all*, not just the Israelite; no one needs to fear that they would be turned away from their place of refuge in their time of need (Num 35:15).
- d. Both Jesus and the cities of refuge became a place where the one in need would *live*; you didn't come to a city of refuge in time of need just to look around (Num 35:25).
- e. Both Jesus and the cities of refuge are the *only alternative* for the one in need; without this specific protection, they will be destroyed.
- f. Both Jesus and the cities of refuge provide protection *only within their boundaries*; to go outside meant death (Num 35:26-28).
- g. With both Jesus and the cities of refuge, full freedom comes with the *death of the High Priest* (Num 35:25).
- h. A *crucial distinction*: The cities of refuge only helped the *innocent*; the *guilty* can come to Jesus and find refuge!

B. Other legal principles.

1. (14) *The principle of the landmark.*

You shall not remove your neighbor's landmark, which the men of old have set, in your inheritance which you will inherit in the land that the LORD your God is giving you to possess.

a. **You shall not remove your neighbor's landmark:** God here established and supported the basic right to private property. When your neighbor has a lawful landmark, you must respect it - and are forbidden to change it as you might please.

i. This command supports an important foundation for human society: The right to personal property. God

has clearly entrusted certain possessions to certain individuals, and other people or states are not permitted to take that property without due process of law.

b. **Which the men of old have set:** This law also reflects an important spiritual principle: It isn't wise to ignore what the **men of old have set** when doing the work of the LORD. Many a young man, or a new man, has greatly hindered his own work by being a revolutionary - and ignoring the "landmarks" which the **men of old have set**.

2. (15-20) *The principle of true and false witness.*

One witness shall not rise against a man concerning any iniquity or any sin that he commits; by the mouth of two or three witnesses the matter shall be established. If a false witness rises against any man to testify against him of wrongdoing, then both men in the controversy shall stand before the LORD, before the priests and the judges who serve in those days. And the judges shall make careful inquiry, and indeed, if the witness is a false witness, who has testified falsely against his brother, then you shall do to him as he thought to have done to his brother; so you shall put away the evil from among you. And those who remain shall hear and fear, and hereafter they shall not again commit such evil among you.

a. **One witness shall not rise:** One witness was never enough to establish a fact in a Biblical court of law. One needed **two or three witness** to establish a matter.

i. This isn't just because it is possible for one witness to lie without having his story corroborated. It is because one witness can be confused, or mistaken in his testimony. It is a basic measure of reliability that it

must be more than a simple case of "my word against theirs."

ii. Some have carried this principle to modern courts by saying that two independent lines of evidence can be valid "witnesses." For example, if there were a murder which no one witnessed with their eyes, yet there was a murder weapon with clear fingerprints, and additional blood evidence each pointing to one suspect, this would be counted as two independents "witnesses."

b. **If a false witness rises against any man to testify:** **False witness** was discovered by careful examination (**the judges shall make diligent inquiry**) and was punished by giving the false witness the same penalty which would have gone to the man he falsely accused (**you shall do to him as he thought to have done to his brother**).

i. At the trial of Jesus, many false witnesses rose up against him, and were demonstrated to be false witnesses by their confused and contradictory testimony (Mat 26:59-60). The false witnesses, under Jewish law, should have been put to death, because that is the punishment they sought for Jesus.

c. **And those who remain shall hear and fear:** Many modern people doubt that the punishment of others is an effective deterrent to crime; but the Bible clearly says that it is. Weak or inconsistent punishment does not deter crime, but effective punishment does.

3. (21) ***Eye for eye, tooth for tooth.***

Your eye shall not pity: life shall be for life, eye for eye, tooth for tooth, hand for hand, foot for foot.

a. **Your eye shall not pity:** This was an important principle for the Biblical court of law; here, connected to

the punishment described for false witness, it shows that whatever evil was planned or practiced against another, a similar punishment should be brought against the false witness.

b. **Life shall be for life, eye for eye:** However, retribution was always limited by the **eye for eye** principle. This law was meant to be a check to our desire to revenge, not a license for revenge.

i. Our tendency is to want to do *more* to the offending party than what they have done to us. But we cannot punish from a motive of revenge, only from a motive of justice.

ii. "Far from encouraging vengeance it limits vengeance and stands as a guide for a judge as he fixes a penalty suited to the crime. The principle was thus not license or vengeance, but a guarantee of justice." (Thompson)

c. **Eye for eye, tooth for tooth:** In Mat 5:38-39, Jesus quoted this passage in His teaching on the true interpretation of the law. He does not say that the **eye for eye** principle is wrong; rather, He simply condemns the use of it to make it an *obligation* to exact revenge against someone who has *personally* offended me.

i. Many Rabbis in Jesus' day taught that the **eye for eye** law meant you were obligated to avenge yourself of a personal insult or attack brought against you. Jesus rightly disallowed the application of this law in our personal relationships; it was a law intended to guide the judges in the law courts of Israel, not to guide our personal relationships.

ii. "Jesus' criticism of this law (Mat 5:38 f.) arose from its use to regulate conduct between individuals. He did not reject it as a principle of justice which

should operate in the courts of the land. For private relationships He proposed the ideal of brotherhood, a strong principle throughout the book of Deuteronomy. To extend the *lex talionis* to this interpersonal domain was to destroy the law of God." (Thompson)

Laws Concerning Warfare

Deu 20:1 "When you go out to fight against your enemies and you see chariots and horses and an army that outnumbers yours, do not be afraid of them. The LORD your God, who rescued you from Egypt, will be with you.

Deu 20:2 Before you start fighting, a priest is to come forward and say to the army,

Deu 20:3 'Men of Israel, listen! Today you are going into battle. Do not be afraid of your enemies or lose courage or panic.

Deu 20:4 The LORD your God is going with you, and he will give you victory.'

Deu 20:5 "Then the officers will address the men and say, 'Is there any man here who has just built a house, but has not yet dedicated it? If so, he is to go home. Otherwise, if he is killed in battle, someone else will dedicate his house.

Deu 20:6 Is there any man here who has just planted a vineyard, but has not yet had the chance to harvest its grapes? If so, he is to go home. Otherwise, if he is killed in battle, someone else will enjoy the wine.

Deu 20:7 Is there anyone here who is engaged to be married? If so, he is to go home. Otherwise, if he is killed in battle, someone else will marry the woman he is engaged to.'

Deu 20:8 "The officers will also say to the men, 'Is there any man here who has lost his nerve and is afraid? If so, he is to go home. Otherwise, he will destroy the morale of the others.'

Deu 20:9 When the officers have finished speaking to the army, leaders are to be chosen for each unit.

Deu 20:10 "When you go to attack a city, first give its people a chance to surrender.

Deu 20:11 If they open the gates and surrender, they are all to become your slaves and do forced labor for you.

Deu 20:12 But if the people of that city will not surrender, but choose to fight, surround it with your army.

Deu 20:13 Then, when the LORD your God lets you capture the city, kill every man in it.

Deu 20:14 You may, however, take for yourselves the women, the children, the livestock, and everything else in the city. You may use everything that belongs to your enemies. The LORD has given it to you.

Deu 20:15 That is how you are to deal with those cities that are far away from the land you will settle in.

Deu 20:16 "But when you capture cities in the land that the LORD your God is giving you, kill everyone.

Deu 20:17 Completely destroy all the people: the Hittites, the Amorites, the Canaanites, the Perizzites, the Hivites, and the Jebusites, as the LORD ordered you to do.

Deu 20:18 Kill them, so that they will not make you sin against the LORD by teaching you to do all the disgusting things that they do in the worship of their gods.

Deu 20:19 "When you are trying to capture a city, do not cut down its fruit trees, even though the siege lasts a long time. Eat the fruit, but do not destroy the trees; the trees are not your enemies.

Deu 20:20 You may cut down the other trees and use them in the siege mounds until the city is captured.

Deuteronomy 20:1-20

Deuteronomy 20 - Instructions Concerning Warfare

A. The spiritual and practical preparation of the army.

1. (1) The command to trust in God.

When you go out to battle against your enemies, and see horses and chariots and people more numerous than you, do not be afraid of them; for the LORD your God is with you, who brought you up from the land of Egypt.

a. **When you go out to battle against your enemies, and see horses and chariots and people more numerous than you:** Israel, a small nation surrounded by great empires, was rarely in a strategically superior position. In battle, they usually saw **horses and chariots and people more numerous than you**.

b. **Do not be afraid of them:** Despite the clear danger, they also had a clear command from God to not fear. Israel was commanded to not fear what any logical military man *would* fear: superior numbers, superior technology, and superior equipment.

c. **For the LORD your God is with you:** Yet, Israel was given a *reason* to not fear. God did not deny that the enemies of Israel would usually have more horses, chariots, and people than Israel. But God asked them to recognize a greater fact: That **the LORD your God is with you**.

i. As Paul said it in Rom 8:31 : *If God is for us, who can be against us?* One with God makes an unbeatable majority.

d. **Who brought you up from the land of Egypt:** Israel was also given evidence for faith. God didn't ask Israel to have a "blind" trust in Him. They could trust Him as they went into battle because He had proven Himself mighty and faithful before. He had a track record which could be trusted.

2. (2-4) The command to encourage people before battle.

So it shall be, when you are on the verge of battle, that the priest shall approach and speak to the people. And he shall say to them, "Hear, O Israel: Today you are on the verge of battle with your enemies. Do not let your heart faint, do not be afraid, and do not tremble or be terrified because of them; for the LORD your God is He who goes with you, to fight for you against your enemies, to save you."

a. **When you are on the verge of battle:** At this critical time, it was the job of the **priest** to encourage the soldiers to trust in God. Though the priests were not normally to go into battle themselves (they were not numbered among the fighting men of Israel, Num 1:47-53), the priests still had an important job when Israel went to war - to spiritually teach and encourage the soldiers!

b. **The LORD your God is He who goes with you, to fight for you against your enemies, to save you:**

This was the reason for courage. When Israel was obedient, and trusting in God, they could never lose. But when they were disobedient, or not trusting, they could never win - even if they had superior forces.

3. (5-9) How to shrink an army and make it more effective.

Then the officers shall speak to the people, saying: "What man is there who has built a new house and has not dedicated it? Let him go and return to his house, lest he die in the battle and another man dedicate it. Also what man is there who has planted a vineyard and has not eaten of it? Let him go and return to his house, lest he die in the battle and another man eat of it. And what man is there who is betrothed to a woman and has not married her? Let him go and return to his house, lest he die in the

battle and another man marry her.” The officers shall speak further to the people, and say, “What man is there who is fearful and fainthearted? Let him go and return to his house, lest the heart of his brethren faint like his heart.” And so it shall be, when the officers have finished speaking to the people, that they shall make captains of the armies to lead the people.

- a. **What man is there who has built a new house and has not dedicated it:** God first told the officers of the army of Israel to send home all the soldiers who had unfinished business at home: a home he has not used, a vineyard he has not harvested, or an engaged woman he has not married - let them go home.
- b. **What man is there who is fearful and fainthearted:** Next, the officers of Israel were to send home all who were **fearful and fainthearted**. They might just make the others fearful also! In the spiritual army of God, He only wants willing, brave soldiers.
- c. **When the officers have finished speaking to the people:** God was perfectly willing to use those who were left after the officers had excused all of those under the previous two conditions. Both of these exemptions - remarkable among any army - were a powerful testimony that Israel trusted in God for military victory, not in their own ability to raise a mighty, large army.
 - i. To God, the *size* of the army wasn’t important; the *heart* of the army was far more important. He didn’t want people who might be distracted from the real battle by worrying about the cares of everyday life (their home, their vineyard, their fiancée’); nor did He want people who were not really trusting Him. God could do more through a *smaller* army that was really committed to Him than through a *bigger* army that was full of compromise.

ii. The story of Gideon (Judges 7) is a powerful illustration of this; Gideon started with an army of 32,000, but it was too big - so he sent home those who were afraid, and 22,000 left! But it was still too big, so God had him send home 7,700 more, so he only had an army of 300 to fight against a Midianite army of 135,000! Yet God gave him the victory.

d. **Make captains of the armies to lead the people:** God commanded that His army have leadership. No matter how good the soldiers were, they needed to have good leadership.

B. Instructions for battle.

It is important to note that God gave instructions to Israel on how to conduct war. There are, in God's way of doing things, rules for war. It cannot be conducted in any way conceivable or in any way that might bring victory. These principles are reflected in the ancient Christian teachings regarding just war.

1. (10-11) The offer of peace.

When you go near a city to fight against it, then proclaim an offer of peace to it. And it shall be that if they accept your offer of peace, and open to you, then all the people who are found in it shall be placed under tribute to you, and serve you.

a. **When you go near a city to fight against it:** The following verses describe the normal battle procedures for Israel. There were many times when God gave specific instructions which would supersede these normal instructions, such as with the battle of Jericho or the conquest of Canaan in general.

b. **Proclaim an offer of peace:** It was important that Israel did not fight unnecessarily. If the city would agree

to terms of peace, then they should come to an agreement.

c. **It shall be placed under tribute to you:** The conquered city would be made a tribute city to Israel, subservient to the nation of Israel.

2. (12-15) *Conquering a city through siege and battle.*

Now if the city will not make peace with you, but makes war against you, then you shall besiege it. And when the LORD your God delivers it into your hands, you shall strike every male in it with the edge of the sword. But the women, the little ones, the livestock, and all that is in the city, all its spoil, you shall plunder for yourself; and you shall eat the enemies' plunder which the LORD your God gives you. Thus you shall do to all the cities which are very far from you, which are not of the cities of these nations.

a. **You shall besiege it:** Typically, a walled city was conquered by use of the *siege*. Enemy armies surrounded a city and cut off all their supplies and contact with the outside world. When the city was sufficiently weakened through hunger or thirst, they either surrendered or were conquered. Sometimes a siege would last for years.

i. There are a few horrific sieges described in the Scriptures, such as a siege of Samaria in 2Ki 6:24-33.

b. **You shall strike every male:** It was simply understood in the ancient world that any surviving male would be a perpetual enemy of the people who had conquered his city. Prisoners of war were often not taken in ancient warfare; enemies were simply killed.

c. **You shall plunder for yourself:** Plunder provided the wages for the army in ancient warfare and

underwrote the expenses for the battle.

3. (16-18) *The command to utterly destroy the Canaanites.*

But of the cities of these peoples which the LORD your God gives you as an inheritance, you shall let nothing that breathes remain alive, but you shall utterly destroy them: the Hittite and the Amorite and the Canaanite and the Perizzite and the Hivite and the Jebusite, just as the LORD your God has commanded you, lest they teach you to do according to all their abominations which they have done for their gods, and you sin against the LORD your God.

a. **You shall let nothing that breathes remain:** The previous commands regarding warfare did not apply to the upcoming conquest of Canaan. There, not only was Israel not to offer peace to the cities, but they were also to destroy everything, not only the adult males. This was a unique war of judgment, more than a war of conquest or defense.

b. **Lest they teach you to do according to their abominations which they have done for their gods:** This explains why such a complete destruction was commanded. The culture of the Canaanites was so corrupt - socially, morally, and spiritually - that God considered it irredeemable, and ripe for judgment. In this unique war, the armies of Israel were to bring that judgment upon the Canaanites.

4. (19-20) *The command to save trees for food during a siege.*

When you besiege a city for a long time, while making war against it to take it, you shall not destroy its trees by wielding an ax against them; if you can eat of them, do not cut them down to use in the siege, for the tree of the field is man's food. Only the trees

which you know are not trees for food you may destroy and cut down, to build siegeworks against the city that makes war with you, until it is subdued.

- a. **When you besiege a city for a long time:** When an army surrounded a city during a siege, the army would forage around the countryside for supplies. Needing wood for building and fuel, it would be common for the besieging army to cut down trees in the area around the city.
- b. **Only the trees which you know are not trees for food you may destroy and cut down:** However, God commanded Israel against cutting down **trees for food** when they besieged a city. They had to take a long-term view (one good for the ecology) and see that their immediate need for wood was less important than the long-term good of the area.

Atonement for Unsolved Murders

Deu 21:1 "Suppose someone is found murdered in a field in the land that the LORD your God is going to give you, and you do not know who killed him.

Deu 21:2 Your leaders and judges are to go out and measure the distance from the place where the body was found to each of the nearby towns.

Deu 21:3 Then the leaders of the town nearest to where the body was found are to select a young cow that has never been used for work.

Deu 21:4 They are to take it down to a spot near a stream that never runs dry and where the ground has never been plowed or planted, and there they are to break its neck.

Deu 21:5 The levitical priests are to go there also, because they are to decide every legal case involving violence. The LORD your God has chosen them to serve him and to pronounce blessings in his name.

Deu 21:6 Then all the leaders from the town nearest the place where the murdered person was found are to wash their hands over the cow

Deu 21:7 and say, 'We did not murder this one, and we do not know who did it.

Deu 21:8 LORD, forgive your people Israel, whom you rescued from Egypt. Forgive us and do not hold us responsible for the murder of an innocent person.'

Deu 21:9 And so, by doing what the LORD requires, you will not be held responsible for the murder.

Marrying Female Captives

Deu 21:10 "When the LORD your God gives you victory in battle and you take prisoners,

Deu 21:11 you may see among them a beautiful woman that you like and want to marry.

Deu 21:12 Take her to your home, where she will shave her head, cut her fingernails,

Deu 21:13 and change her clothes. She is to stay in your home and mourn for her parents for a month; after that, you may marry her.

Deu 21:14 Later, if you no longer want her, you are to let her go free. Since you forced her to have intercourse with you, you cannot treat her as a slave and sell her.

Inheritance Rights of the Firstborn

Deu 21:15 "Suppose a man has two wives and they both bear him sons, but the first son is not the child of his favorite wife.

Deu 21:16 When the man decides how he is going to divide his property among his children, he is not to show partiality to the son of his favorite wife by giving him the share that belongs to the first-born son.

Deu 21:17 He is to give a double share of his possessions to his first son, even though he is not the son of his favorite

wife. A man must acknowledge his first son and give him the share he is legally entitled to.

A Rebellious Son

Deu 21:18 "Suppose someone has a son who is stubborn and rebellious, a son who will not obey his parents, even though they punish him.

Deu 21:19 His parents are to take him before the leaders of the town where he lives and make him stand trial.

Deu 21:20 They are to say to them, 'Our son is stubborn and rebellious and refuses to obey us; he wastes money and is a drunkard.'

Deu 21:21 Then the men of the city are to stone him to death, and so you will get rid of this evil. Everyone in Israel will hear what has happened and be afraid.

A Man Hanged on a Tree Is Cursed

Deu 21:22 "If someone has been put to death for a crime and the body is hung on a post,

Deu 21:23 it is not to remain there overnight. It must be buried the same day, because a dead body hanging on a post brings God's curse on the land. Bury the body, so that you will not defile the land that the LORD your God is giving you.

Deuteronomy 21:1-23

Deuteronomy 21 - Various Laws

A. The law of unsolved murders.

1. (1) *The presence of an unsolved murder.*

If anyone is found slain, lying in the field in the land which the LORD your God is giving you to possess, and it is not known who killed him,

a. **If anyone is found slain:** Presumably, death from natural causes had been ruled out and it was evident

that the deceased had been murdered; yet, it was **not known who killed him**.

b. **It is not know who killed him:** This was important based on a principle stated in Num 35:33-34. This passage shows that the blood of unsolved, unavenged murder defiles and pollutes the land. Therefore, if there is a murder unavenged, some kind of cleansing is necessary, so the land will not be defiled.

2. (2-6) *The procedure for atoning for murder-polluted land.*

Then your elders and your judges shall go out and measure the distance from the slain man to the surrounding cities. And it shall be that the elders of the city nearest to the slain man will take a heifer which has not been worked and which has not pulled with a yoke. The elders of that city shall bring the heifer down to a valley with flowing water, which is neither plowed nor sown, and they shall break the heifer's neck there in the valley. Then the priests, the sons of Levi, shall come near, for the LORD your God has chosen them to minister to Him and to bless in the name of the LORD; by their word every controversy and every assault shall be settled. And all the elders of that city nearest to the slain man shall wash their hands over the heifer whose neck was broken in the valley.

a. **The elders of the city nearest to the slain man:** First, the matter of jurisdiction had to be settled. These **elders** were responsible to make the sacrifice to atone for and cleanse the murder-polluted land.

b. **A heifer which has not been worked:** Then, appropriate sacrifice had to be made. This **heifer** was sacrificed by the **sons of Levi** in the presence of the city elders, who washed their hands over the sacrificed animal.

i. This washing of the hands, done in the presence of the **sons of Levi**, who **by their word every controversy and every assault shall be settled**, was a powerful proclamation by the elders: "We have done all we could to settle this case, but cannot. We are clean from all guilt in the matter of this slain man."

ii. Of course, this *ceremony* of washing the hands over the sacrificed animal meant nothing if the elders had in fact *not* done what they could to avenge the murder; apart from that, this washing of the hands was just as much an empty gesture as Pilate's washing of his hands at the trial of Jesus (Mat 27:24).

3. (7-9) The prayer said by the elders as they washed their hands.

Then they shall answer and say, "Our hands have not shed this blood, nor have our eyes seen it. Provide atonement, O LORD, for Your people Israel, whom You have redeemed, and do not lay innocent blood to the charge of Your people Israel." And atonement shall be provided on their behalf for the blood. So you shall put away the *guilt of innocent blood* from among you when you do *what is right* in the sight of the LORD.

a. **Provide atonement, O LORD:** Again, Num 35:33-34 makes the principle clear, that unavenged murders defile and pollute the land and atonement must be made for the land itself.

b. **So you shall put away the guilt of innocent blood:** When Israel followed God's instructions for atonement, He honored His word by taking away their guilt. But the removal of guilt was always based on blood sacrifice, on a substitutionary atonement - looking

forward to the work of Jesus on the cross for the entire world.

B. Laws relevant to family and home situations.

1. (10-14) *Laws regarding the taking of a wife from conquered peoples.*

When you go out to war against your enemies, and the LORD your God delivers them into your hand, and you take them captive, and you see among the captives a beautiful woman, and desire her and would take her for your wife, then you shall bring her home to your house, and she shall shave her head and trim her nails. She shall put off the clothes of her captivity, remain in your house, and mourn her father and her mother a full month; after that you may go in to her and be her husband, and she shall be your wife. And it shall be, if you have no delight in her, then you shall set her free, but you certainly shall not sell her for money; you shall not treat her brutally, because you have humbled her.

a. **And you see among the captives a beautiful woman, and desire her:** In the ancient world, it was not uncommon for a man to take a wife from **among the captives**, especially if she was **a beautiful woman**. Yet obviously, this was open to great abuse, so God give specific guidelines to govern this practice in Israel.

b. **Shave her head and trim her nails:** First, the captive woman had to be *purified and humbled*. This denoted a complete break with her past, and the willingness to start anew, humbly as a child.

c. **Put off the clothes of her captivity, remain in your house:** Second, the captive woman had to show a *change of allegiance*. This showed that the captive

woman no longer regarded her former nation and her former family; now she was a citizen of Israel.

d. **Mourn her father and mother a full month:** Third, the captive woman had to *mourn her past associations*. This would be time when she could resolve issues in her heart regarding her family, and when her husband-to-be could live with her a month without intimate relations - so he could see if he really wanted to take this woman as a wife, and to make sure he was not making a decision based only of physical appearance or attractiveness.

e. **You certainly shall not sell her for money; you shall not treat her brutally:** After the month of mourning, the potential husband was free to marry the captive woman - yet, he did not have to. But if he decided not to, he had to set her free with dignity. This was a remarkable protection of the rights of a captive woman.

2. (15-17) *The protection of inheritance rights.*

If a man has two wives, one loved and the other unloved, and they have borne him children, both the loved and the unloved, and if the firstborn son is of her who is unloved, then it shall be, on the day he bequeaths his possessions to his sons, that he must not bestow firstborn status on the son of the loved wife in preference to the son of the unloved, the true firstborn. But he shall acknowledge the son of the unloved wife as the firstborn by giving him a double portion of all that he has, for he is the beginning of his strength; the right of the firstborn is his.

a. **If a man has two wives:** Obviously, there are going to be problems in a home like this, especially if there is **one loved and the other unloved**. Yet, God commanded that the inheritance rights of the firstborn

son be respected, even if he were the son of the **unloved** wife.

b. **A double portion of all that he has:** This was the **right of the firstborn** in ancient Israel; the firstborn son was to receive twice as much inheritance as any other son. For example, if there were three sons, the inheritance would be divided into four parts, with the firstborn receiving two parts, and the other three sons each receiving one part.

3. (18-21) *The penalty for a rebellious son.*

If a man has a stubborn and rebellious son who will not obey the voice of his father or the voice of his mother, and who, when they have chastened him, will not heed them, then his father and his mother shall take hold of him and bring him out to the elders of his city, to the gate of his city. And they shall say to the elders of his city, "This son of ours is stubborn and rebellious; he will not obey our voice; he is a glutton and a drunkard." Then all the men of his city shall stone him to death with stones; so you shall put away the evil from among you, and all Israel shall hear and fear.

a. **A stubborn and rebellious son:** This does not mean a small child, or even a young teen - but a son past the age of accountability, who sets himself in determined rebellion against his father and mother.

b. **Who, when they have chastened him, will not heed them:** The parents must have done a good job raising the son, calling him to obedience, and chastening him as appropriate before the LORD.

c. **Bring him out to the elders of his city:** Such a *stubborn and rebellious son* was to be put on trial before the elders of the city. If they determine him to be

chronically rebellious, then the son was to be stoned to death.

- i. It is important to note that the parents could not, by themselves, execute this penalty. They had to bring the son on trial before impartial judges. This is in contrast to ancient Greek and Roman law, which gave fathers the absolute right of life or death over their children. This was a *control* of parental authority more than it was an *exercise* of it.
- ii. The parents had to take the boy to the elders of the community; not only because the decision of life or death should be taken out of their direct hands, but because the guilt of the *stubborn and rebellious son* was not only against his parents, but against the whole community. He sowed the seeds for cultural suicide in Israel.

d. **And all Israel shall hear and fear:** This law was clearly intended to protect the social order of ancient Israel. No society can endure when the young are allowed to make war against the old.

- i. Perhaps just the presence of this law was deterrent enough; we never have a Scriptural example of a son being stoned to death because he was a *stubborn and rebellious son*.
- ii. "Yet the Jews say this law was never put into practice, and therefore it might be made for terror and prevention, and to render the authority of parents more sacred and powerful." (Poole)
- iii. "Stoning was the punishment appointed for blasphemers and idolaters; which if it seem severe, it is to be considered that parents are in God's stead, and entrusted in good measure with his authority over their children; and that families are the matter

and foundation of the church and commonwealth, and they who are naughty members and rebellious children in them, do commonly prove the bane and plague of these, and therefore no wonder if they are nipped in the bud." (Poole)

iv. "If such a law were in force now, and duly executed, how many deaths of disobedient and profligate children would there be in all corners of the land!" (Clarke)

4. (22-23) *The curse upon one who hangs on a tree.*

If a man has committed a sin deserving of death, and he is put to death, and you hang him on a tree, his body shall not remain overnight on the tree, but you shall surely bury him that day, so that you do not defile the land which the LORD your God is giving you as an inheritance; for he who is hanged is accursed of God.

a. **And you hang him on a tree:** In the thinking of ancient Israel there was something worse than being put to death. Worse than that was to be put to death and to have your corpse left exposed to shame, humiliation, and scavenging animals and birds.

i. **Hang him on a tree** does not have the idea of being executed by strangulation; but of having the corpse mounted on a tree or other prominent place, to expose the executed one to disgrace and the elements.

b. **His body shall not remain overnight on the tree, but you shall surely bury him that day:** Therefore, if anyone was executed and deemed worthy of such disgrace (**and you hang him on a tree**), the humiliation to his memory and his family must not be excessive. This

was a way of tempering even the most severe judgment with mercy.

i. "It is worthy of remark that in the infliction of punishment prescribed by the Mosaic law, we ever find that *Mercy* walks hand in hand with *Judgment*."
(Clarke)

c. **For he who is hanged is accursed of God:** The punishment of being hanged on a tree, and left to open exposure, was thought to be so severe, that it was reserved only for those for which it was to be declared: "this one is **accursed of God**."

i. Paul expounds on Deu 21:23 in Gal 3:13-14 : *Christ has redeemed us from the curse of the law, having become a curse for us (for it is written, "Cursed is everyone who hangs on a tree"), that the blessing of Abraham might come upon the Gentiles in Christ Jesus, that we might receive the promise of the Spirit through faith.* Jesus not only died in our place; but He also took the place as the **accursed of God**, being hung on a "tree" in open shame and degradation. He received this curse, which we deserved, and He did not, so that we could receive the *blessing of Abraham*, which He deserved, and we did not.

ii. We are *redeemed from the curse of the law* by the work of Jesus on the cross for us. We no longer have to fear that God wants to curse us; He wants to *bless* us, not because of who we are, or what we have done, but because of what Jesus Christ has done on our behalf.

Various Laws

Deu 22:1 "If you see an Israelite's cow or sheep running loose, do not ignore it; take it back.

Deu 22:2 But if its owner lives a long way off or if you don't know who owns it, then take it home with you. When its owner comes looking for it, give it to him.

Deu 22:3 Do the same thing if you find a donkey, a piece of clothing, or anything else that an Israelite may have lost.

Deu 22:4 "If an Israelite's donkey or cow has fallen down, don't ignore it; help him get the animal to its feet again.

Deu 22:5 "Women are not to wear men's clothing, and men are not to wear women's clothing; the LORD your God hates people who do such things.

Deu 22:6 "If you happen to find a bird's nest in a tree or on the ground with the mother bird sitting either on the eggs or with her young, you are not to take the mother bird.

Deu 22:7 You may take the young birds, but you must let the mother bird go, so that you will live a long and prosperous life.

Deu 22:8 "When you build a new house, be sure to put a railing around the edge of the roof. Then you will not be responsible if someone falls off and is killed.

Deu 22:9 "Do not plant any crop in the same field with your grapevines; if you do, you are forbidden to use either the grapes or the produce of the other crop.

Deu 22:10 "Do not hitch an ox and a donkey together for plowing.

Deu 22:11 "Do not wear cloth made by weaving wool and linen together.

Deu 22:12 "Sew tassels on the four corners of your clothes.

Laws Concerning Sexual Immorality

Deu 22:13 "Suppose a man marries a young woman and later he decides he doesn't want her.

Deu 22:14 So he makes up false charges against her, accusing her of not being a virgin when they got married.

Deu 22:15 "If this happens, the young woman's parents are to take the blood-stained wedding sheet that proves she was a virgin, and they are to show it in court to the town leaders.

Deu 22:16 Her father will say to them, 'I gave my daughter to this man in marriage, and now he doesn't want her.

Deu 22:17 He has made false charges against her, saying that she was not a virgin when he married her. But here is the proof that my daughter was a virgin; look at the bloodstains on the wedding sheet!'

Deu 22:18 Then the town leaders are to take the husband and beat him.

Deu 22:19 They are also to fine him a hundred pieces of silver and give the money to the young woman's father, because the man has brought disgrace on an Israelite woman. Moreover, she will continue to be his wife, and he can never divorce her as long as he lives.

Deu 22:20 "But if the charge is true and there is no proof that she was a virgin,

Deu 22:21 then they are to take her out to the entrance of her father's house, where the men of her city are to stone her to death. She has done a shameful thing among our people by having intercourse before she was married, while she was still living in her father's house. In this way you will get rid of this evil.

Deu 22:22 "If a man is caught having intercourse with another man's wife, both of them are to be put to death. In this way you will get rid of this evil.

Deu 22:23 "Suppose a man is caught in a town having intercourse with a young woman who is engaged to someone else.

Deu 22:24 You are to take them outside the town and stone them to death. She is to die because she did not cry out for help, although she was in a town, where she could

have been heard. And the man is to die because he had intercourse with someone who was engaged. In this way you will get rid of this evil.

Deu 22:25 "Suppose a man out in the countryside rapes a young woman who is engaged to someone else. Then only the man is to be put to death;

Deu 22:26 nothing is to be done to the woman, because she has not committed a sin worthy of death. This case is the same as when one man attacks another man and murders him.

Deu 22:27 The man raped the engaged woman in the countryside, and although she cried for help, there was no one to help her.

Deu 22:28 "Suppose a man is caught raping a young woman who is not engaged.

Deu 22:29 He is to pay her father the bride price of fifty pieces of silver, and she is to become his wife, because he forced her to have intercourse with him. He can never divorce her as long as he lives.

Deu 22:30 "No man is to disgrace his father by having intercourse with any of his father's wives.

Deuteronomy 22:1-30

Deuteronomy 22 - Various Laws

A. Laws to demonstrate kindness and purity.

1. (1-4) Kindness to your brother regarding his animals.

You shall not see your brother's ox or his sheep going astray, and hide yourself from them; you shall certainly bring them back to your brother. And if your brother is not near you, or if you do not know him, then you shall bring it to your own house, and it shall remain with you until your brother seeks it; then you shall restore it to him. You shall do the same with his

donkey, and so shall you do with his garment; with any lost thing of your brother's, which he has lost and you have found, you shall do likewise; you must not hide yourself. You shall not see your brother's donkey or his ox fall down along the road, and hide yourself from them; you shall surely help him lift them up again.

a. **You shall not see... and hide yourself:** God here condemned the sin of doing *nothing*. To see your brother in need, and to do nothing, is to do evil. When one has the opportunity to do good, **you must not hide yourself.**

b. **Until your brother seeks it; then you shall restore it to him:** Simply put, when something is lost, a finder cannot claim it as theirs without taking all due diligence to restore it to the owner. If the owner seeks the missing object, it must be restored to him.

i. Exo 23:4-5 commands Israel to also help stray animals but extends the obligation to the stray animals of an *enemy*, not just a brother.

c. **You shall surely help him lift them up again:** Also, if someone's donkey falls down, and you can help them, then you must. To pass by your brother in need and to **hide yourself from them** is to sin against your brother and against God.

2. (5) *A command to keep distinction between the sexes in clothing.*

A woman shall not wear anything that pertains to a man, nor shall a man put on a woman's garment, for all who do so are an abomination to the LORD your God.

a. **Anything that pertains to a man:** In Old Testament times, men and women wore clothing that was

superficially similar - long robes and wrapping garments were common for both sexes. Yet, the specific types of garments and the way in which they were worn made a clear distinction between the sexes, and this command instructs God's people to respect those distinctions.

- i. Some have taken this command to be the "proof-text" against women wearing pants and some Christian groups command that women wear only dresses. Yet, this is not a command against women wearing a garment that in some ways might be common between men and women; it is a command against dressing in a manner which deliberately blurs the lines between the sexes.
- b. **Nor shall a man put on a woman's garment:** This does not prohibit a man from wearing a kilt; yet it clearly prohibits a man dressing like a woman, as is all too common - and all too accepted - in our modern culture.
 - i. The dramatic rise in cross-dressing, transvestitism, androgynous behavior, and "gender-bender" behavior in our culture is a shocking trampling of this command and will reap a bitter harvest in more perversion and more gender confusion in our culture.
- c. **All who do so are an abomination to the LORD your God:** This command to observe the distinction between the sexes is so important, those who fail to observe it are called **an abomination to the LORD**. This was not only because cross-dressing was a feature of pagan, idolatrous worship in the ancient world, but also because of the terrible cultural price that is paid when it is pretended that there is no difference between men and women.
 - i. "Later writers, such as Lucian of Samosata and Eusebius, speak of the practice of masquerading in the worship of Astarte. Apparently women appeared

in men's garments and men in women's garments." (Thompson)

3. (6-7) *A command to show kindness to animals.*

If a bird's nest happens to be before you along the way, in any tree or on the ground, with young ones or eggs, with the mother sitting on the young or on the eggs, you shall not take the mother with the young; you shall surely let the mother go, and take the young for yourself, that it may be well with you and that you may prolong your days.

a. **If a bird's nest happens to be before you along the way:** God simply and plainly commanded kindness to animals. Even **a bird's nest** was to be given special consideration and care.

i. Some Jewish commentators say that this is the smallest, or least of all the commandments; yet even it has a promise of blessing for the obedient attached to it: **That it may be well with you and that you may prolong your days.**

b. **You shall surely let the mother go:** Puritan commentator Matthew Poole wrote on this, "Partly for the bird's sake, which suffered enough by the loss of its young; for God would not have cruelty exercised towards the brute creatures; and partly for men's sake, to restrain their greediness and covetousness, that they should not monopolize all to themselves, but might leave the hopes of a future seed for others."

c. **That it may be well with you and that you may prolong your days.** If Israel would obey this commandment, they would find blessing and long life, both as individuals and as a nation. What possible connection can there be between showing kindness to

bird's nests and eggs and little baby birds and national survival?

- i. First, because obedience to the smallest of God's commands brings blessing. It puts us into a properly submissive relationship to Him, that this always brings blessing to us.
- ii. Second, because kindness and gentleness in the small things often (but not always) speaks to our ability to be kind and gentle in weightier matters. If someone is cruel to animals, not only is that sin in itself, but they are also much more likely to be cruel to people. If Israel allowed such cruelty to flourish, it would harm the nation.

4. (8) *Liability and building codes.*

When you build a new house, then you shall make a parapet for your roof, that you may not bring guilt of bloodshed on your household if anyone falls from it.

- a. **You shall make a parapet for your roof:** God commanded that a railing be made for the rooftop, so someone was protected against falling.
- b. **That you may not bring bloodshed on your house:** Failure to build in a safe way would bring guilt (liability) on the owner or builder of the home. They were responsible for the safety of those who would use the home.
 - i. In his sermon on Deu 22:8, titled "Battlements," Charles Spurgeon shows how just as there was to be a railing for the protection of people on the roofs of Israel's homes, there are also spiritual railings for our protection. Many people, in regard to sin, get too close to the edge and fall off. Then it's too late! We need to have "railings" protecting us from the edge. Such railings will not only protect us, but others also.

5. (9-12) *Four laws of separation.*

You shall not sow your vineyard with different kinds of seed, lest the yield of the seed which you have sown and the fruit of your vineyard be defiled. You shall not plow with an ox and a donkey together. You shall not wear a garment of different sorts, such as wool and linen mixed together. You shall make tassels on the four corners of the clothing with which you cover yourself.

a. **You shall not sow your vineyard with different kinds of seed:** Each of these laws was meant to separate Israel from her pagan neighbors, who would commonly combine unlike things to achieve what was thought to be a “magical” combination.

b. **You shall not plow with an ox and a donkey together:** So, in pagan cultures it was common to combine **different kinds of seed** in a **vineyard**; or to **plow with an ox and a donkey together**; or to wear a garment of **wool and linen mixed together**. When God commands Israel to *not* do these things, it isn’t so much for the sake of the combinations themselves, but so Israel would not imitate the pagan, occult customs of their neighbors.

i. There is a spiritual application of this principle; the commands forbidding unholy combinations, “though in themselves small and trivial, are given... to forbid all mixture of their inventions with God’s institutions, in doctrine or worship.” (Poole)

ii. As Paul says, *do not be unequally yoked together with unbelievers. For what fellowship has righteousness with lawlessness? And what communion has light with darkness?* (2Co 6:14)

iii. One commentator believes that these laws were also given, in part, to protect other animals from the bad breath of donkeys: "Besides, the donkey, from feeding on coarse and poisonous weed, has a fetid breath, which its yoke-fellow seeks to avoid, not only as poisonous and offensive, but producing leanness, or, if long continued, death." (Jameison-Fauset-Brown, page 673)

c. **You shall make tassels on the four corners of the clothing:** This command was also to distinguish Israel from their pagan neighbors; in this way, an Israelite man was immediately known by the clothes he wore.

i. "A symbolic meaning is given to these tassels in Num 15:37-41, namely that they are a reminder to Israel to keep God's law." (Thompson)

ii. Like most good commands of God, men have the capability to twist and corrupt this command. In Jesus' day, He had to condemn the Pharisees in Mat 23:5, saying they *enlarge the borders of their garments*. In other words, they made the tasseled portion of their garments larger and more prominent to show how spiritual they were.

B. Laws of sexual morality.

1. (13-21) Resolving an accusation of marital deception.

If any man takes a wife, and goes in to her, and detests her, and charges her with shameful conduct, and brings a bad name on her, and says, "I took this woman, and when I came to her I found she was not a virgin," then the father and mother of the young woman shall take and bring out the evidence of the young woman's virginity to the elders of the city at the gate. And the young woman's father shall say to the elders, "I gave my daughter to this man as wife,

and he detests her. Now he has charged her with shameful conduct, saying, 'I found your daughter was not a virgin,' and yet these *are the evidences of* my daughter's virginity." And they shall spread the cloth before the elders of the city. Then the elders of that city shall take that man and punish him; and they shall fine him one hundred *shekels* of silver and give *them* to the father of the young woman, because he has brought a bad name on a virgin of Israel. And she shall be his wife; he cannot divorce her all his days. But if the thing is true, *and evidences of* virginity are not found for the young woman, then they shall bring out the young woman to the door of her father's house, and the men of her city shall stone her to death with stones, because she has done a disgraceful thing in Israel, to play the harlot in her father's house. So you shall put away the evil from among you.

a. **Charges her with shameful conduct:** The idea is that the man accused his wife of not being a virgin when they were married. Apparently, this was discovered on their wedding night, when they first had intimate relations (**when I came into her I found she was not a virgin**).

i. It is important to understand that in ancient Israel virginity was valued. It was seen as a great loss to give up one's virginity before marriage, and if a woman was known to have lost her virginity, it greatly reduced her chances of getting married.

ii. By the same principle, if a husband believed that his wife had lied about her virginity, he felt cheated. What follows is an attempt to resolve the issue.

b. **Then the father and mother... bring out the evidence of the young woman's virginity... they**

shall spread the cloth before the elders of the city: according to custom, a Jewish woman would first be intimate with her husband upon a special cloth, which would collect the small drops of blood which were accepted as **evidence of the young woman's virginity**. This bloodstained cloth would then become the property of the married woman's parents, who kept it as the **evidence of the young woman's virginity**.

- i. Many people argue that this custom of proving a woman's virginity is absurd, because it doesn't always work. Some have answered by saying it does "work" when ladies are given in marriage at twelve or thirteen years of age, as was the custom in Old Testament times.
 - ii. Nonetheless, for whatever reasons, the custom did "work" - and is still practiced in some parts of the world. "The proofs of virginity, the blood-spotted bedclothes or garments, which, though not infallible, were widely accepted in the ancient Near East as indications of prior virginity, are still accepted among some peoples today" (Kalland). Clarke also adds: "A custom similar to that above is observed among the Mohamedans to the present day."
 - iii. Clarke on **they shall spread the cloth**: "A usage of this kind argues a roughness of manners which would ill comport with the refinement of European ideas on so delicate a subject."
- c. **The elders of the city shall take that man and punish him:** If the parents could produce the evidence, then the man was found to have made false accusation against his wife and it was commanded that a fine to be paid to the father of his bride.

- i. Additionally, the man had forfeited his future right to divorce this wife: **he cannot divorce her all his**

days.

ii. The strong penalty against a man who made a false accusation (**one hundred shekels of silver** was a significant fine), and the loss of his right to divorce his wife in the future was an effective deterrent against wild, false accusations by a husband against his wife.

d. **But if the thing is true, and evidences of virginity are not found for the young woman:** If this were the case, the woman was to be executed by stoning. This was not only for her sexual promiscuity (**to play the harlot**), but also for her attempt to deceive her husband.

i. This law must be seen in connection with the command in Exo 22:16-17, which commands that a man who *entices a virgin* must *surely pay the bride-price for her to be his wife*. This law in Deuteronomy is directed against the truly wanton woman, who has given up her virginity, yet not claimed her rights under Exo 22:16-17. She did not value her virginity at the time she gave it up, yet she wanted to claim the benefits of it by deceiving her husband.

ii. All this simply reinforces the principle that virginity was valued, highly valued, in Israel. Today, far too many people - especially women - sell themselves cheaply by easily giving away their virginity. A man illustrated this with a true story about a friend who owned an antique store and had a table for sale. The table was worth \$600 but was marked down to \$300. A man tried to bargain her down to \$200, and not only did she refuse, but she realized the true value of the table, and upped the price to its true worth - even when offered \$300. The man finally bought the table for \$600, and certainly treated it like a \$600 table - because its worth had been fought for. Many women

who know they are being treated shabbily by men have contributed to the problem by selling themselves cheaply.

2. (22) *The penalty for adultery.*

If a man is found lying with a woman married to a husband, then both of them shall die; the man that lay with the woman, and the woman; so you shall put away the evil from Israel.

a. **Both of them shall die:** God commanded the death penalty for adultery. This was primarily because of the exceedingly great social consequences of this sin. Therefore, God commanded the ultimate penalty against it.

i. God also specifically instructs: **both the man that lay with the woman, and the woman.** Adultery was not to be condemned with a double standard; if it was wrong for the woman, it was wrong for the man, and vice-versa.

b. **Then both of them shall die:** As a practical matter, this death penalty was rarely carried out, as is the case in most of the situations where capital punishment was commanded. This is because any capital crime required two or three witnesses, and the witnesses had to be so sure of what they saw that they were willing to "cast the first stone" - that is, initiate the execution (Deu 17:6-7).

i. So, particularly in a case of adultery (or other sexual sins) there would rarely be two eyewitnesses willing to initiate the execution - and so capital punishment would not be carried out.

ii. This also helps us to understand what Jesus was doing when confronting the crowd who brought to Him the woman taken in adultery. By their presence and words, they claimed to have caught the woman in

the act - but why then did they not bring the guilty man as well? And who was willing to cast the first stone - that is, initiate the execution? (Joh 8:1-12)

c. **So you shall put away the evil from Israel:**

Though the death penalty for adultery was carried out rarely, it still had value. It communicated loudly and clearly an *ideal* that Israel was to live up to, and it made people regard their sin much more seriously. Today, we have done away with this ideal, and people don't care much about adultery - and society suffers greatly as a result.

3. (23-29) *Laws concerning rape.*

If a young woman who is a virgin is betrothed to a husband, and a man finds her in the city and lies with her, then you shall bring them both out to the gate of that city, and you shall stone them to death with stones, the young woman because she did not cry out in the city, and the man because he humbled his neighbor's wife; so you shall put away the evil from among you. But if a man finds a betrothed young woman in the countryside, and the man forces her and lies with her, then only the man who lay with her shall die. But you shall do nothing to the young woman; there is in the young woman no sin deserving of death, for just as when a man rises against his neighbor and kills him, even so is this matter. For he found her in the countryside, and the betrothed young woman cried out, but there was no one to save her. If a man finds a young woman who is a virgin, who is not betrothed, and he seizes her and lies with her, and they are found out, then the man who lay with her shall give to the young woman's father fifty shekels of silver, and she shall be his wife because he

has humbled her; he shall not be permitted to divorce her all his days.

a. **If a young woman who is a virgin is betrothed to a husband:** If a man had intimate relations with a virgin who was **betrothed to a husband**, and it happened **in the city** (and no one immediately hears the woman **cry out** in an attempt to stop the man), then both were to be executed.

i. The woman was to be executed for disgracing her virginity; the man was to be executed **because he humbled his neighbor's wife**. Interestingly, the woman was considered the **wife** of another man, even though she was only **betrothed**, and was still a **virgin**, having not yet consummated the marriage.

b. **But if a man finds a betrothed young woman in the countryside:** If a man had intimate relations with a virgin who was **betrothed**, and it happened **in the countryside** (where no one could hear the woman, even if she should cry out), then only the man was to be executed, because the woman was presumed to be the victim of rape.

i. Significantly, the woman was not blamed for the rape, and it was *presumed* that she was innocent in this circumstance.

c. **If a man finds a young woman who is a virgin, who is not betrothed:** If a man had intimate relations with a virgin **who is not betrothed**, then he must pay a fine and was obligated to marry the woman (presumably, if she will have him), and he forfeited his right to divorce her in the future.

i. Some Jewish commentators note that the **fifty shekels of silver** were to be paid *in addition to* the dowry.

4. (30) A law concerning incest.

A man shall not take his father's wife, nor uncover his father's bed.

a. **A man shall not take his father's wife:** This probably described the case of a son marrying his stepmother after his father had died. This was considered incest, even though there was not a blood relation, because he was considered to have had **uncovered his father's bed.**

b. **Nor uncover his father's bed:** Significantly, this was exactly the same kind of immoral relationship that the Corinthian church accepted, and Paul had to rebuke them about - *that a man has his father's wife!* (1Co 5:1-2)

Those Excluded from the Assembly

Deu 23:1 "No man who has been castrated or whose penis has been cut off may be included among the LORD's people.

Deu 23:2 "No one born out of wedlock or any descendant of such a person, even in the tenth generation, may be included among the LORD's people.

Deu 23:3 "No Ammonite or Moabite—or any of their descendants, even in the tenth generation—may be included among the LORD's people.

Deu 23:4 They refused to provide you with food and water when you were on your way out of Egypt, and they hired Balaam son of Beor, from the city of Pethor in Mesopotamia, to curse you.

Deu 23:5 But the LORD your God would not listen to Balaam; instead he turned the curse into a blessing, because he loved you.

Deu 23:6 As long as you are a nation, never do anything to help these nations or to make them prosperous.

Deu 23:7 "Do not despise the Edomites; they are your relatives. And do not despise the Egyptians; you once lived in their land.

Deu 23:8 From the third generation onward their descendants may be included among the LORD's people.

Uncleanness in the Camp

Deu 23:9 "When you are in camp in time of war, you are to avoid anything that would make you ritually unclean.

Deu 23:10 If a man becomes unclean because he has had a wet dream during the night, he is to go outside the camp and stay there.

Deu 23:11 Toward evening he is to wash himself, and at sunset he may come back into camp.

Deu 23:12 "You are to have a place outside the camp where you can go when you need to relieve yourselves.

Deu 23:13 Carry a stick as part of your equipment, so that when you have a bowel movement you can dig a hole and cover it up.

Deu 23:14 Keep your camp ritually clean, because the LORD your God is with you in your camp to protect you and to give you victory over your enemies. Do not do anything indecent that would cause the LORD to turn his back on you.

Miscellaneous Laws

Deu 23:15 "If slaves run away from their owners and come to you for protection, do not send them back.

Deu 23:16 They may live in any of your towns that they choose, and you are not to treat them harshly.

Deu 23:17 "No Israelite, man or woman, is to become a temple prostitute.

Deu 23:18 Also, no money earned in this way may be brought into the house of the LORD your God in fulfillment of a vow. The LORD hates temple prostitutes.

Deu 23:19 "When you lend money or food or anything else to Israelites, do not charge them interest.

Deu 23:20 You may charge interest on what you lend to foreigners, but not on what you lend to Israelites. Obey this rule, and the LORD your God will bless everything you do in the land that you are going to occupy.

Deu 23:21 "When you make a vow to the LORD your God, do not put off doing what you promised; the LORD will hold you to your vow, and it is a sin not to keep it.

Deu 23:22 It is no sin not to make a vow to the LORD,

Deu 23:23 but if you make one voluntarily, be sure that you keep it.

Deu 23:24 "When you walk along a path in someone else's vineyard, you may eat all the grapes you want, but you must not carry any away in a container.

Deu 23:25 When you walk along a path in someone else's grainfield, you may eat all the grain you can pull off with your hands, but you must not cut any grain with a sickle.

Deuteronomy 23:1-25

Deuteronomy 23 - Instructions to the Assembly, Various Laws

A. Those excluded from the congregation of Israel.

1. (1) *Eunuchs are excluded from the congregation of Israel.*

He who is emasculated by crushing or mutilation shall not enter the assembly of the LORD.

a. **By crushing or mutilation:** This refers to those **emasculated** by either birth defect, accident, or by deliberate emasculation.

b. **Shall not enter the assembly of the LORD:** When we read this term, it usually refers to the nation

gathered before the LORD in worship, such as when they were gathered at Mount Sinai (Deu 5:22; Deu 9:10; Deu 10:4; Deu 18:16). But it doesn't always have this sense.

- i. Deu 31:30 refers to *all the congregation of Israel*, while Deu 31:28 makes it clear that "all the congregation" was gathered through *all the elders of your tribes, and your officers*. So, in some contexts, *the congregation* can refer to *elders* and *officers*. It may very well be that these exclusions from the **assembly of the LORD** are exclusions not from the religious life of Israel, but from the political life of the nation.
 - ii. Poole suggests that the idea of **the assembly of the LORD** is the leadership, or the rulers of Israel. These people were barred not from the religious life of Israel, but from the political life of the nation. Trapp agrees, saying on **shall not enter the assembly of the LORD**: "Shall not go in and out before the people as a public officer." Clarke adds, "If by entering into the congregation be meant the bearing a *civil* office among the people, such as magistrate, judge, &c., then the reason of the law is very plain."
 - iii. Isa 56:3-5 shows that even eunuchs and foreigners could be accepted before the LORD if they would obey Him, and they would be accepted before the "normal" people who disobeyed God.
- c. **Shall not enter the assembly of the LORD:** Eunuchs were excluded because God's covenant with Israel was vitally connected with the idea of the *seed*, and emasculation is a "crime" against the seed of man. Additionally, most eunuchs were made to be so in pagan ceremonies where they were dedicated to pagan gods.

2. (2) *Those of unknown parentage are excluded from the assembly of Israel (civil leadership in Israel).*

One of illegitimate birth shall not enter the assembly of the LORD; even to the tenth generation none of his descendants shall enter the assembly of the LORD.

a. **One of illegitimate birth:** It is difficult to define exactly what is meant by the term **of illegitimate birth**. Some later Jewish writers defined this as someone who was born of an incestuous relationship between Jews; others said it refers to those born of mixed marriages between the people of Israel and their pagan neighbors (as in Neh 13:23).

3. (3-6) *Ammonites and Moabites are excluded from the congregation of Israel (civil leadership in Israel).*

An Ammonite or Moabite shall not enter the assembly of the LORD; even to the tenth generation none of his descendants shall enter the assembly of the LORD forever, because they did not meet you with bread and water on the road when you came out of Egypt, and because they hired against you Balaam the son of Beor from Pethor of Mesopotamia, to curse you. Nevertheless the LORD your God would not listen to Balaam, but the LORD your God turned the curse into a blessing for you, because the LORD your God loves you. You shall not seek their peace nor their prosperity all your days forever.

a. **An Ammonite or Moabite shall not enter the assembly of the LORD:** The Moabites and the Ammonites not only treated Israel cruelly on their way to the Promised Land, but they also were a people with a disgraceful beginning. Moab and Ammon were the two sons born to the daughters of Lot through their incest with their father (Gen 19:30-38).

4. (7-8) *Edomites and Egyptians (of the third generation)* are permitted to be among the congregation of Israel (civil leadership in Israel).

You shall not abhor an Edomite, for he is your brother. You shall not abhor an Egyptian, because you were an alien in his land. The children of the third generation born to them may enter the assembly of the LORD.

a. **You shall not abhor an Edomite:** The Edomites were ethnically related to Israel, because Israel's brother Esau was the father of the Edomite peoples. Therefore, Israel was commanded to **not abhor an Edomite**.

i. Interestingly, one of the most famous Edomites in history was abhorred by Israel - Herod the Great. Many of his spectacular building projects in Judea were intended to not only glorify his own name, but to win the favor of the Jews who despised him as an Edomite.

b. **You shall not abhor an Egyptian:** The Egyptians were also to receive more favor than the Moabites or Ammonites, because Israel was a guest in Egypt for almost 400 years. Though the years Israel spent in Egypt were hard, God had a great purpose for them. Egypt was like a mother's womb for Israel; they went in as a large family and came out as a distinct nation.

B. Miscellaneous laws.

1. (9-14) *Cleanliness in the camp.*

When the army goes out against your enemies, then keep yourself from every wicked thing. If there is any man among you who becomes unclean by some occurrence in the night, then he shall go outside the camp; he shall not come inside the camp. But it shall be, when evening comes, that he shall wash with

water; and when the sun sets, he may come into the camp. Also you shall have a place outside the camp, where you may go out; and you shall have an implement among your equipment, and when you sit down outside, you shall dig with it and turn and cover your refuse. For the LORD your God walks in the midst of your camp, to deliver you and give your enemies over to you; therefore your camp shall be holy, that He may see no unclean thing among you, and turn away from you.

- a. **When the army goes out against your enemies, then keep yourself from every wicked thing:** God commanded *ceremonial* cleanliness among the army of Israel. **Some occurrence in the night** probably refers to nocturnal emissions, and the cleansing ceremony for this is described in Lev 15:16-18. After observing the ceremonial washing, **he may come into the camp again.**
- b. **And you shall have an implement among your equipment:** God commanded *sanitary* cleanliness among the army of Israel; each soldier was to carry some type of shovel, with which he could **cover** [his] **refuse.**
 - i. This command was given, "Partly, to prevent the annoyance of ourselves or others; partly, to preserve and exercise modesty and natural honesty; and principally, that by such outward rites they might be inured to the greater reverence of the Divine Majesty, and the greater caution to avoid all real and moral uncleanness." (Poole)
 - ii. Some ancient rabbis taught that the holy city of Jerusalem should be considered "the camp of the LORD." Under this reasoning, one had to go outside the camp to relieve one's self. However, for many

people, the trip outside the large "camp" of Israel (the city of Jerusalem) was longer than what would be permitted on the Sabbath. Therefore, as a practical matter, the rabbis prohibited a Jew from relieving themselves on the Sabbath day.

2. (15-16) *Israel to provide asylum for the foreign escaped slave.*

You shall not give back to his master the slave who has escaped from his master to you. He may dwell with you in your midst, in the place which he chooses within one of your gates, where it seems best to him; you shall not oppress him.

a. **You shall not give back to his master the slave who has escaped from his master to you:** "The refugee slave referred to had evidently come from a foreign land. Otherwise there would have been legal complications, since slaves were a valued possession." (Thompson)

3. (17-18) *Sacred prostitution banned.*

There shall be no ritual harlot of the daughters of Israel, or a perverted one of the sons of Israel. You shall not bring the wages of a harlot or the price of a dog to the house of the LORD your God for any vowed offering, for both of these are an abomination to the LORD your God.

a. **Ritual harlot:** This refers to a female prostitute. The term **perverted one** refers to a male prostitute, both of which were common among the pagan religions of the Canaanites and others in the ancient world.

i. Later, in the reigns of Asa (1Ki 15:12) and Josiah (2Ki 23:7) we are told that the *perverted persons* (male prostitutes) were expelled from Israel. This means that for some period of time before they were

expelled, they were allowed to practice their "holy prostitution," which was an **abomination to the LORD your God**.

b. **You shall not bring the wages of a harlot or the price of a dog to the house of the LORD your God:**

The pay of a female prostitute (**the hire of a harlot**) and the pay of a male prostitute (**the price of a dog**) were never to be offered to the LORD. This was a common practice among the sacred prostitution cults that abounded in the ancient world.

i. A reminder of the principle that the work of the LORD does not need money from immoral or ill-gotten gains.

ii. Even in its most gross forms, this kind of practice has been allowed in the institutional church. "And what a stinking shame is that, that stews and brothel-houses are licensed by the Pope, who reaps no small profit by them?" (Trapp, writing in 1659)

4. (19-20) *No interest to be charged to the family of Israel.*

You shall not charge interest to your brother; interest on money or food or anything that is lent out at interest. To a foreigner you may charge interest, but to your brother you shall not charge interest, that the LORD your God may bless you in all to which you set your hand in the land which you are entering to possess.

a. **You shall not charge interest to your brother; interest on money or food:** The mention of **food**, and the similar command in Exo 22:25, leads most to understand that interest was prohibited on loans made to the poor for their basic needs, and did not prohibit the taking of interest on loans that were not for relief of the poor.

b.

To a foreigner you may charge interest: "But since merchants from other nations might come for business reasons to Israel, or make loans on interest to Israelites, foreigners could be charged interest." (Kalland)

5. (21-23) *The importance of keeping our vows.*

When you make a vow to the LORD your God, you shall not delay to pay it; for the LORD your God will surely require it of you, and it would be sin to you. But if you abstain from voweding, it shall not be sin to you. That which has gone from your lips you shall keep and perform, for you voluntarily vowed to the LORD your God what you have promised with your mouth.

a. **You shall not delay to pay it:** A vow before God is no small thing. God expressly commanded that Israel should be careful to keep its vows and to fulfill every oath made, **for the LORD your God will surely require it of you, and it would be sin to you.**

i. In many circles today, the breaking of an oath is just standard business practice - but before God, it is simply sin.

b. **If you abstain from voweding:** Many wonder if vows or oaths are permitted for a Christian today.

i. Some think not, because of what Jesus said in Mat 5:34-37 : *But I say to you, do not swear at all: neither by heaven, for it is God's throne; nor by the earth, for it is His footstool; nor by Jerusalem, for it is the city of the great King. Nor shall you swear by your head, because you cannot make one hair white or black. But let your 'Yes' be 'Yes,' and your 'No,' 'No.' For whatever is more than these is from the evil one.* (See also Jas 5:12)

ii. But, in context of the rest of Scripture, we see that Jesus was not forbidding oaths, as much as telling us that we should be so filled with integrity in our words that an oath is unnecessary.

iii. Jesus answered under oath in a court (Mat 26:63-64), and God Himself swears oaths (Luk 1:73, Act 2:30, Heb 3:18; Heb 6:13; Heb 6:17).

c. **But if you abstain from vowing, it shall not be sin to you:** God never requires vows; many times, it is better not to make a vow.

d. **That which has gone from your lips you shall keep and perform:** This shows how important it is to keep a vow once made. As it says in Ecc 5:4-5, *When you make a vow to God, do not delay to pay it; for He has no pleasure in fools. Pay what you have vowed. It is better not to vow than to vow and not pay.*

i. Many vows are just plain foolish - "I'll never do that again" is a foolish vow, and it is foolish and unwise to demand such a vow from someone else.

ii. Of course, there is a vow we all can and should make - a vow to praise God: *Vows made to You are binding upon me, O God; I will render praises unto You (Psa 56:12). So I will sing praise to Your name forever, that I may daily perform my vows (Psa 61:8).*

6. (24-25) *The right to glean is given to travelers.*

When you come into your neighbor's vineyard, you may eat your fill of grapes at your pleasure, but you shall not put any in your container. When you come into your neighbor's standing grain, you may pluck the heads with your hand, but you shall not use a sickle on your neighbor's standing grain.

a. When you come into your neighbor's vineyard:

The idea is that, as one traveled they had the right to pick off a few grapes or heads of grain to eat along the way. It wasn't the right to harvest from your neighbor's fields, but to provide for your own immediate needs.

b. You may pluck the heads with your hand: This is the law Jesus and His disciples were operating under when they *plucked heads of grain and ate them, rubbing them in their hands* (Luk 6:1-5). They were accused by the Pharisees of breaking the Sabbath, but not of stealing grain, because the Pharisees knew this law in the book of Deuteronomy.

Laws Concerning Divorce

Deu 24:1 "Suppose a man marries a woman and later decides that he doesn't want her, because he finds something about her that he doesn't like. So he writes out divorce papers, gives them to her, and sends her away from his home.

Deu 24:2 Then suppose she marries another man,

Deu 24:3 and he also decides that he doesn't want her, so he also writes out divorce papers, gives them to her, and sends her away from his home. Or suppose her second husband dies.

Deu 24:4 In either case, her first husband is not to marry her again; he is to consider her defiled. If he married her again, it would be offensive to the LORD. You are not to commit such a terrible sin in the land that the LORD your God is giving you.

Miscellaneous Laws

Deu 24:5 "When a man is newly married, he is not to be drafted into military service or any other public duty; he is to be excused from duty for one year, so that he can stay at home and make his wife happy.

Deu 24:6 "When you lend someone something, you are not to take as security his millstones used for grinding his grain. This would take away the family's means of preparing food to stay alive.

Deu 24:7 "If any of you kidnap Israelites and make them your slaves or sell them into slavery, you are to be put to death. In this way your nation will get rid of this evil.

Deu 24:8 "When you are suffering from a dreaded skin disease, be sure to do exactly what the levitical priests tell you; follow the instructions that I have given them.

Deu 24:9 Remember what the LORD your God did to Miriam as you were coming from Egypt.

Deu 24:10 "When you lend someone something, do not go into his house to get the garment he is going to give you as security;

Deu 24:11 wait outside and let him bring it to you himself.

Deu 24:12 If he is poor, do not keep it overnight;

Deu 24:13 return it to him each evening, so that he can have it to sleep in. Then he will be grateful, and the LORD your God will be pleased with you.

Deu 24:14 "Do not cheat poor and needy hired servants, whether they are Israelites or foreigners living in one of your towns.

Deu 24:15 Each day before sunset pay them for that day's work; they need the money and have counted on getting it. If you do not pay them, they will cry out against you to the LORD, and you will be guilty of sin.

Deu 24:16 "Parents are not to be put to death for crimes committed by their children, and children are not to be put to death for crimes committed by their parents; people are to be put to death only for a crime they themselves have committed.

Deu 24:17 "Do not deprive foreigners and orphans of their rights; and do not take a widow's garment as security for a

loan.

Deu 24:18 Remember that you were slaves in Egypt and that the LORD your God set you free; that is why I have given you this command.

Deu 24:19 "When you gather your crops and fail to bring in some of the grain that you have cut, do not go back for it; it is to be left for the foreigners, orphans, and widows, so that the LORD your God will bless you in everything you do.

Deu 24:20 When you have picked your olives once, do not go back and get those that are left; they are for the foreigners, orphans, and widows.

Deu 24:21 When you have gathered your grapes once, do not go back over the vines a second time; the grapes that are left are for the foreigners, orphans, and widows.

Deu 24:22 Never forget that you were slaves in Egypt; that is why I have given you this command.

Deuteronomy 24:1-22

Deuteronomy 24 - The Law of Divorce and Other Various Laws

A. Divorce, remarriage and marriage.

1. (1) *The law of divorce in ancient Israel.*

When a man takes a wife and marries her, and it happens that she finds no favor in his eyes because he has found some uncleanness in her, and he writes her a certificate of divorce, puts it in her hand, and sends her out of his house,

a. **A certificate of divorce:** According to these laws, divorce was allowed in Israel, but carefully regulated. Under God's law, the marriage contract cannot be simply dissolved as soon as one partner wants out; there must be cause for **a certificate of divorce.**

- i. Even with cause, divorce was never to be seen as a preferred or easy option. The Hebrew word translated **divorce** has as its root the idea of "a hewing off, a cutting apart" - it is the amputation of that which is one flesh.
 - ii. "(Christians) all regard divorce as something like cutting up a living body, as a kind of surgical operation. Some think that the operation is so violent that it cannot be done at all; others admit that it is a desperate remedy in extreme cases. They are all agreed that it is more like having your legs cut off than it is like dissolving a business partnership or even deserting a regiment." (C.S. Lewis)
- b. **He writes her a certificate of divorce:** God commands here that any divorce be sealed with **a certificate of divorce**. In other words, it was not enough for a man to just declare, "we're divorced" to his wife. The divorce had to be recognized legally just as the marriage had been, so **a certificate of divorce** - a legal document - must be issued, and properly served (**puts it in her hand**).
- c. **She finds no favor in his eyes because he has found some uncleanness in her:** This describes the *grounds* of divorce and indicates that a **certificate of divorce** could not be written for just any reason. It had to be founded on these two important clauses.
- i. There has to be **some uncleanness in her**. Some later Rabbis defined **uncleanness** as anything in the wife which might displease the husband. At the time of Jesus, some Rabbis taught that if a wife burned her husband's breakfast, he could divorce her.
 - ii. But Jesus carefully and properly defined what **uncleanness** is in Deu 24:1. He said, *whoever divorces his wife, except for sexual immorality, and*

marries another, commits adultery (Mat 19:9). Jesus rightly understood that **uncleanness** refers to sexual *immorality*, a broad term referring to sexual sin, which includes, but is not restricted to, sexual intercourse with someone who is not your spouse. The Hebrew word translated **uncleanness** in itself implies the meaning of sexual immorality; it is literally, “nakedness of a thing.”

iii. So, if a husband finds **some uncleanness in her**, he has the right to give his wife a **certificate of divorce**. But he is not *obligated* to do so. It must also be that **she finds no favor in his eyes because he has found some uncleanness in her**. In other words, it must be that the husband is so troubled at his wife’s sexual immorality that he simply cannot look upon her with **favor in his eyes** any more. The lack of **favor in his eyes** must be **because** of her **uncleanness**.

iv. This helps us understand what Jesus said in Mat 19:8 : *Moses, because of the hardness of your hearts, permitted you to divorce your wives, but from the beginning it was not so.* If a woman did not have a hard heart, she would never commit sexual immorality against her husband, and there would be no need for divorce. If a husband did not have any hardness in his heart, he could forgive and still look upon his wife with **favor in his eyes**, even though she was guilty of sexual immorality. But because God knows there is hardness in our hearts - both in the offending and offended parties - He grants *permission* for divorce.

v. In the days of Jesus, Rabbis taught that it was the *duty* of a godly man to divorce his wife if she displeased him. Both Moses and Jesus make it clear

that God *permits* divorce in certain circumstances, but never *commands* it.

vi. Yet, if someone has Biblical grounds of divorce (which, according to 1Co 7:15, includes abandonment by an unbelieving spouse), they certainly do have *permission* to divorce, and God does not "hold it against them," unless of course, He has specifically told them to *not* divorce and they are disobeying His specific word to their lives.

d. **He writes her a certificate of divorce:** Most people think that in ancient Israel, only husbands had the right to divorce their wives, and wives did not have the right of divorce. But what is said here may be intended to be applied to both husband and wife. Jesus, in Mar 10:12 says *and if a woman divorces her husband and marries another*, clearly saying that in His day, a wife had the right to divorce.

2. (2-4) *The law of remarriage in ancient Israel.*

When she has departed from his house, and goes and becomes another man's wife, if the latter husband detests her and writes her a certificate of divorce, puts it in her hand, and sends her out of his house, or if the latter husband dies who took her as his wife, then her former husband who divorced her must not take her back to be his wife after she has been defiled; for that is an abomination before the LORD, and you shall not bring sin on the land which the LORD your God is giving you as an inheritance.

a. **Her former husband who divorced her must not take her back:** This is a strong law, saying that if a divorced woman marries again, she could not return to her first husband, should her second marriage end through divorce or death. To break this law was **an abomination before the LORD.**

b. **An abomination before the LORD:** It seems that it might be a good thing for the first husband and wife to get back together. But this command is made because God wanted both marriage and divorce to be seen as serious, permanent things. One couldn't be married or divorced casually; it had to be carefully thought out because it was *permanent*.

i. This law would also strengthen the second marriage; it would discourage a spouse from thinking they might as well just leave their second marriage and go back to their first partner.

3. (5) *The law honoring marriage.*

When a man has taken a new wife, he shall not go out to war or be charged with any business; he shall be free at home one year, and bring happiness to his wife whom he has taken.

a. **He shall be free at home one year:** This was God's way of honoring and blessing the marriage covenant. He allowed men who were newly married to be exempt from military or other state service for one year.

b. **Bring happiness to his wife:** This is an important job for every husband. Even as before the LORD, we find our lives by losing them (Mat 10:39), so a husband will find the most happiness if he will **bring happiness to his wife.**

i. As the role of the husband in Ephesians 5 is described, we see that God emphasizes the essential oneness between husband and wife. The husband cannot make his wife happy without also bringing happiness into his own life. Conversely, he cannot bring misery into the life of his spouse without also bringing misery into his own life.

ii. A happy wife is the foundation for a happy home; a bitter or contentious wife makes for a miserable home. *A continual dripping on a very rainy day and a contentious woman are alike* (Pro 27:15). *Better to dwell in a corner of a housetop, than in a house shared with a contentious woman.* (Pro 21:9). *Better to dwell in the wilderness, than with a contentious and angry woman* (Pro 21:19).

B. Other various laws.

1. (6) *Do not take someone's livelihood as a pledge.*

No man shall take the lower or the upper millstone in pledge, for he takes one's living in pledge.

a. **No man shall take the lower or the upper millstone in pledge:** A **millstone** was something essential to a family's livelihood, therefore it was forbidden to take it as a guarantee for a loan.

i. This warns Israel against taking advantage of each other in times of great need. We must take care that we never unfairly profit from the poverty or difficulty of others.

b. **For he takes one's living in pledge:** Non-essential items could be taken as a **pledge**. Although interest could not be charged on a loan to an Israelite in need, a **pledge** could be taken - collateral to guarantee the repayment of the loan. This command forbids the taking of collateral that would take away a man's ability to provide for his family and get himself out of debt.

2. (7) *The punishment for kidnapping.*

If a man is found kidnapping any of his brethren of the children of Israel, and mistreats him or sells him, then that kidnapper shall die; and you shall put away the evil from among you.

a. **If a man is found kidnapping any of his brethren of the children of Israel:** Kidnapping was usually done in the ancient world not so much for return and ransom, but so that one could sell the one abducted to slavery, just as was done to Joseph by his brothers (Gen 37:28).

b. **That kidnapper shall die:** This crime was serious enough before God, so as to command the death penalty.

3. (8-9) *The command to act swiftly when leprosy breaks out.*

Take heed in an outbreak of leprosy, that you carefully observe and do according to all that the priests, the Levites, shall teach you; just as I commanded them, so you shall be careful to do. Remember what the LORD your God did to Miriam on the way when you came out of Egypt.

a. **Take heed in an outbreak of leprosy:** Leviticus 13, 14 describe in great detail how God wanted lepers examined and quarantined. Because leprosy was such a dreaded disease, God commands here that they **take heed in an outbreak of leprosy**, so it would not become a plague throughout Israel.

b. **Remember what the LORD your God did to Miriam:** In Numbers 12, Miriam led her brother Aaron in a rebellion against Moses, and for it, God struck her with leprosy. Though Moses prayed for her to be healed, God let her be a leper for seven days before healing her, and she was *shut out of the camp seven days* (Num 12:14).

If someone as prominent as Miriam was quarantined as a leper, it showed that every other leper in Israel should also be quarantined.

4. (10-13) *Handling a pledge rightly.*

When you lend your brother anything, you shall not go into his house to get his pledge. You shall stand outside, and the man to whom you lend shall bring the pledge out to you. And if the man *is* poor, you shall not keep his pledge overnight. You shall in any case return the pledge to him again when the sun goes down, that he may sleep in his own garment and bless you; and it shall be righteousness to you before the LORD your God.

a. **You shall not go into his house to get his pledge:**

When a **pledge** was taken for a loan, it had to be received in a way that kept the poor man's dignity.

i. God does not condemn the *principle* of taking a pledge, only commanding that it be received humanely. The idea of taking collateral for a loan is valid because it encourages personal responsibility in the one receiving the loan.

b. **You shall not keep his pledge overnight:**

Assuming the pledge was something to keep the man warm (such as a garment or a blanket, which would often be the only pledge a poor man could make), the pledge had to be returned so the man could use it to keep warm overnight.

i. "The Jews in several cases did act contrary to this rule, and we find them cuttingly reproved for it by the Prophet Amos, chap. ii. 8." (Clarke)

5. (14-15) *The command to pay your workers.*

You shall not oppress a hired servant who *is* poor and needy, whether one of your brethren or one of the aliens who *is* in your land within your gates. Each day you shall give him his wages, and not let the sun go down on it, for he *is* poor and has set his heart on it;

lest he cry out against you to the LORD, and it be sin to you.

a. **You shall not oppress a hired servant:** A servant might be oppressed by not being paid, or by brutal or unsafe working conditions. God commanded employers to treat their employees fairly and kindly.

b. **Lest he cry out against you to the LORD:** The LORD hears the cry of the oppressed. Jas 5:4 warns the rich man who oppresses his workers: *Indeed the wages of the laborers who mowed your fields, which you kept back by fraud, cry out; and the cries of the reapers have reached the ears of the Lord of Saboath.*

6. (16) *Each shall bear his own sin.*

Fathers shall not be put to death for their children, nor shall the children be put to death for their fathers; a person shall be put to death for his own sin.

a. **A person shall be put to death for his own sin:** God commanded that each individual be responsible for his or her own sin. A father cannot be blamed and responsible for the sin of their (grown) children, and the children cannot be blamed and responsible for the sin of their parents.

i. It is wrong for a parent to automatically blame themselves for their wayward children; though they may have a part in the problem, it isn't always the case.

b. **For his own sin:** There are instances when God commands that a whole family be punished for sin, such as with the family of Achan in Jos 7:16-26. When God deals with a whole family, it shows that there must have been some conspiracy between family members, for each is responsible **for his own sin.**

7. (17-18) *A command to be compassionate and fair.*

You shall not pervert justice due the stranger or the fatherless, nor take a widow's garment as a pledge. But you shall remember that you were a slave in Egypt, and the LORD your God redeemed you from there; therefore I command you to do this thing.

a. **You shall remember:** If Israel kept remembering how much God had done for them, it would make them more compassionate and fair in dealing with others. We must always deal with others remembering how much God has blessed and forgiven us.

8. (19-22) *Leave behind some of the harvest for the poor.*

When you reap your harvest in your field, and forget a sheaf in the field, you shall not go back to get it; it shall be for the stranger, the fatherless, and the widow, that the LORD your God may bless you in all the work of your hands. When you beat your olive trees, you shall not go over the boughs again; it shall be for the stranger, the fatherless, and the widow. When you gather the grapes of your vineyard, you shall not glean *it* afterward; it shall be for the stranger, the fatherless, and the widow. And you shall remember that you were a slave in the land of Egypt; therefore I command you to do this thing.

a. **It shall be for the stranger, the fatherless, and the widow:** This was one of God's welfare programs for Israel, establishing the right of the gleaner. Farmers were instructed to not completely harvest their fields, so that some would be left behind for the hard-working poor to gather for themselves.

b. **Therefore I command you to do this thing:** This was a wonderful way of helping the poor. It commanded farmers to have a generous heart, and it made the poor to be active and work for their food. It made a way for them to provide for their own needs with dignity.

Deu 25:1 "Suppose two Israelites go to court to settle a dispute, and one is declared innocent and the other guilty.

Deu 25:2 If the guilty one is sentenced to be beaten, the judge is to make him lie face downward and have him whipped. The number of lashes will depend on the crime he has committed.

Deu 25:3 He may be given as many as forty lashes, but no more; more than that would humiliate him publicly.

Deu 25:4 "Do not muzzle an ox when you are using it to thresh grain.

Laws Concerning Levirate Marriage

Deu 25:5 "If two brothers live on the same property and one of them dies, leaving no son, then his widow is not to be married to someone outside the family; it is the duty of the dead man's brother to marry her.

Deu 25:6 The first son that they have will be considered the son of the dead man, so that his family line will continue in Israel.

Deu 25:7 But if the dead man's brother does not want to marry her, she is to go before the town leaders and say, 'My husband's brother will not do his duty; he refuses to give his brother a descendant among the people of Israel.'

Deu 25:8 Then the town leaders are to summon him and speak to him. If he still refuses to marry her,

Deu 25:9 his brother's widow is to go up to him in the presence of the town leaders, take off one of his sandals, spit in his face, and say, 'This is what happens to the man who refuses to give his brother a descendant.'

Deu 25:10 His family will be known in Israel as 'the family of the man who had his sandal pulled off.'

Miscellaneous Laws

Deu 25:11 "If two men are having a fight and the wife of one tries to help her husband by grabbing hold of the other

man's genitals,

Deu 25:12 show her no mercy; cut off her hand.

Deu 25:13 (13-14) "Do not cheat when you use weights and measures.

Deu 25:15 Use true and honest weights and measures, so that you may live a long time in the land that the LORD your God is giving you.

Deu 25:16 The LORD hates people who cheat.

Deu 25:17 "Remember what the Amalekites did to you as you were coming from Egypt.

Deu 25:18 They had no fear of God, and so they attacked you from the rear when you were tired and exhausted, and killed all who were straggling behind.

Deu 25:19 So then, when the LORD your God has given you the land and made you safe from all your enemies who live around you, be sure to kill all the Amalekites, so that no one will remember them any longer. Do not forget!

Deuteronomy 25:1-19

Deuteronomy 25 - More Laws on Various Subjects

A. Two laws to protect criminals and animals.

1. (1-3) A limit on corporal punishment.

If there is a dispute between men, and they come to court, that the judges may judge them, and they justify the righteous and condemn the wicked, then it shall be, if the wicked man deserves to be beaten, that the judge will cause him to lie down and be beaten in his presence, according to his guilt, with a certain number of blows. Forty blows he may give him and no more, lest he should exceed this and beat him with many blows above these, and your brother be humiliated in your sight.

a. **They justify the righteous and condemn the guilty:** This is the simple responsibility of all government and courts. As Paul described the role of government in Rom 13:4 : *For he is God's minister to you for good. But if you do evil, be afraid; for he does not bear the sword in vain; for he is God's minister, an avenger to execute wrath on him who practices evil.*

b. **If the wicked man deserves to be beaten:** Apparently, God considers that some criminals are **wicked** and deserve **to be beaten**. We seem to have a justice system today that considers itself more compassionate and kind than God Himself, yet we can't say that we live in a more just or safe society.

i. "Among the Mohammedans there are very few law-suits, and the reason is given... because they that sue others without just cause are to be whipped publicly." (Trapp)

c. **Forty blows may he give him and no more:** Though sometimes a beating was the appropriate punishment, God also agrees with the idea that there is a such thing as excessive punishment, and this was intended to prevent excessive punishment. Additionally, the beating was to be administered in the presence of the judge (**and be beaten in his presence**), so he could make sure the punishment was not excessive.

i. In 2Co 11:24, Paul listed this among his "apostolic credentials": *From the Jews five times I received forty stripes minus one. The forty stripes minus one* means Paul was beaten by the Jewish authorities with thirty-nine blows on five different occasions. Paul did not receive 40 blows, as according to Deu 25:3 because as a common practice, the Jews only allowed 39 blows to be administered. This was to both show mercy and

to scrupulously keep the law - one blow was left off to protect against a miscount.

2. (4) *The command to not muzzle the ox.*

You shall not muzzle an ox while it treads out the grain.

- a. **You shall not muzzle an ox:** This law simply commanded the humane treatment of a working animal. In those days, grain would be broken away from its husk by having an ox walk on it repeatedly (usually around a circle). It would be cruel to force the ox to walk on all the grain, yet to **muzzle** him so he couldn't eat of it.
- b. **You shall not muzzle an ox:** In 1Co 9:9 and 1Ti 5:18 Paul applied this principle to the minister's right to be supported by the people he ministers to. In fact, 1Co 9:9-10 leads us to believe that this is the *real* point God is making in this verse, because in that passage Paul asked, *is it oxen God is concerned about? Or does He say it altogether for our sakes?*

B. Two laws dealing with family matters.

1. (5-10) *The marriage obligation of surviving brothers.*

If brothers dwell together, and one of them dies and has no son, the widow of the dead man shall not be married to a stranger outside the family; her husband's brother shall go in to her, take her as his wife, and perform the duty of a husband's brother to her. And it shall be that the firstborn son which she bears will succeed to the name of his dead brother, that his name may not be blotted out of Israel. But if the man does not want to take his brother's wife, then let his brother's wife go up to the gate to the elders, and say, "My husband's brother refuses to raise up a name to his brother in Israel; he will not perform the duty of my husband's brother." Then the

elders of his city shall call him and speak to him. But if he stands firm and says, "I do not want to take her," then his brother's wife shall come to him in the presence of the elders, remove his sandal from his foot, spit in his face, and answer and say, "So shall it be done to the man who will not build up his brother's house." And his name shall be called in Israel, "The house of him who had his sandal removed."

a. **One of them dies and has no son:** In ancient Israel it was seen as a great tragedy for a man to die without leaving descendants to carry on his name, and to give his family inheritance to. Therefore, if a man **dies and has no son**, it was the responsibility of one of his brothers to take the deceased brother's widow as a wife and **perform the duty of a husband's brother to her.**

i. "The practice of levirate marriage... was not peculiar to Israel, for it was practiced among the Hittites and Assyrians as well as in countries such as India, Africa and South America." (Thompson)

b. **The firstborn son which she bears will succeed to the name of his dead brother, that his name may not be blotted out of Israel:** When a son was born to this union, it would not be counted as the son of the surviving brother, but as son to the deceased brother.

i. **Son** here may simply mean *child*. "In the history of the interpretation of this Deuteronomic law, difference of opinion existed among Jewish expositors whether *ben* in v.5 meant 'son' or 'child.' The LXX and Josephus render it 'child.' Moses had already established that when no male heir existed, daughters would be heirs or their father's property (Num 27:1-8)."
(Kalland)

c. **He will not perform the duty of my husband's brother:** If the brothers of the deceased man refused to take this responsibility, they were to be called to open shame by the widow. The shame was compounded as they would **remove his sandal** and the widow would **spit in his face.**

2. (11-12) *Wives forbidden to interfere in their husband's fights.*

If two men fight together, and the wife of one draws near to rescue her husband from the hand of the one attacking him, and puts out her hand and seizes him by the genitals, then you shall cut off her hand; your eye shall not pity her.

a. **Then you shall cut off her hand:** In this difficult passage, various suggestions have been made as to why such a severe punishment was commanded. "Possibly it was representative of similar offences and provided a standard for judgment in all such cases. Perhaps also, the law arose from the desire to protect the reproductive organs and thus obviate anything that might prevent a man leaving descendants." (Thompson)

b. **Your eye shall not pity her:** "Partly because of the great mischief she did to him, both to his person and posterity, and partly to deter all women from immodest and impudent carriages, and to secure that modesty which is indeed the guardian of all the virtues, as immodesty is an inlet to all vices, as the sad experience of this degenerate age shows; and therefore it is not strange that it is so severely restrained and punished." (Matthew Poole, 1683)

C. Two laws commanding justice.

1. (13-16) *God commands weights and measures be just.*

You shall not have in your bag differing weights, a heavy and a light. You shall not have in your house differing measures, a large and a small. You shall have a perfect and just weight, a perfect and just measure, that your days may be lengthened in the land which the LORD your God is giving you. For all who do such things, all who behave unrighteously, are an abomination to the LORD your God.

2. (17-19) *God commands Israel to justly destroy Amalek.*

Remember what Amalek did to you on the way as you were coming out of Egypt, how he met you on the way and attacked your rear ranks, all the stragglers at your rear, when you were tired and weary; and he did not fear God. Therefore it shall be, when the LORD your God has given you rest from your enemies all around, in the land which the LORD your God is giving you to possess as an inheritance, that you will blot out the remembrance of Amalek from under heaven. You shall not forget.

a. **Remember what Amalek did:** The Amalekite attack on the Israelites is recorded in Exodus 17. In response, Joshua led the armies of Israel in victory over the Amalekites as Moses prayed for them, assisted by Aaron and Hur.

b. **Blot out the remembrance of Amalek under heaven:** Because of God's strong command to battle against Amalek until they were completely conquered, many see the Amalekites as a picture of our flesh - which constantly battles against the spirit and must be struggled against until completely conquered (Gal 5:17).

c. **When the LORD your God has given you rest:** Israel was to make this war against the Amalekites later, when they were at rest in the land. Some 400 years later, God directed Saul to make war against the

Amalekites, and his failure to completely destroy them was the primary act of disobedience which cost Saul the throne (1Sa 15:2-9; 1Sa 28:18).

Offerings of Firstfruits and Tithes

Deu 26:1 "After you have occupied the land that the LORD your God is giving you and have settled there,

Deu 26:2 each of you must place in a basket the first part of each crop that you harvest and you must take it with you to the one place of worship.

Deu 26:3 Go to the priest in charge at that time and say to him, 'I now acknowledge to the LORD my God that I have entered the land that he promised our ancestors to give us.'

Deu 26:4 "The priest will take the basket from you and place it before the altar of the LORD your God.

Deu 26:5 Then, in the LORD's presence you will recite these words: 'My ancestor was a wandering Aramean, who took his family to Egypt to live. They were few in number when they went there, but they became a large and powerful nation.

Deu 26:6 The Egyptians treated us harshly and forced us to work as slaves.

Deu 26:7 Then we cried out for help to the LORD, the God of our ancestors. He heard us and saw our suffering, hardship, and misery.

Deu 26:8 By his great power and strength he rescued us from Egypt. He worked miracles and wonders, and caused terrifying things to happen.

Deu 26:9 He brought us here and gave us this rich and fertile land.

Deu 26:10 So now I bring to the LORD the first part of the harvest that he has given me.' "Then set the basket down in the LORD's presence and worship there.

Deu 26:11 Be grateful for the good things that the LORD your God has given you and your family; and let the Levites and the foreigners who live among you join in the celebration.

Deu 26:12 "Every third year give the tithe—a tenth of your crops—to the Levites, the foreigners, the orphans, and the widows, so that in every community they will have all they need to eat. When you have done this,

Deu 26:13 say to the LORD, 'None of the sacred tithe is left in my house; I have given it to the Levites, the foreigners, the orphans, and the widows, as you commanded me to do. I have not disobeyed or forgotten any of your commands concerning the tithe.'

Deu 26:14 I have not eaten any of it when I was mourning; I have not taken any of it out of my house when I was ritually unclean; and I have not given any of it as an offering for the dead. I have obeyed you, O LORD; I have done everything you commanded concerning the tithe.

Deu 26:15 Look down from your holy place in heaven and bless your people Israel; bless also the rich and fertile land that you have given us, as you promised our ancestors.'

Deu 26:16 "Today the LORD your God commands you to obey all his laws; so obey them faithfully with all your heart.

Deu 26:17 Today you have acknowledged the LORD as your God; you have promised to obey him, to keep all his laws, and to do all that he commands.

Deu 26:18 Today the LORD has accepted you as his own people, as he promised you; and he commands you to obey all his laws.

Deu 26:19 He will make you greater than any other nation that he has created, and you will bring praise and honor to his name. You will be his own people, as he promised."

Deuteronomy 26:1-19

Deuteronomy 26 - Presenting Firstfruits and Tithes

A. Instruction for bringing the firstfruits and tithes.

1. (1-4) Bringing the firstfruits to the priest.

And it shall be, when you come into the land which the LORD your God is giving you as an inheritance, and you possess it and dwell in it, that you shall take some of the first of all the produce of the ground, which you shall bring from your land that the LORD your God is giving you, and put it in a basket and go to the place where the LORD your God chooses to make His name abide. And you shall go to the one who is priest in those days, and say to him, "I declare today to the LORD your God that I have come to the country which the LORD swore to our fathers to give us." Then the priest shall take the basket out of your hand and set it down before the altar of the LORD your God.

a. **When you come into the land:** The Promised Land lay just across the Jordan River, and though there were formidable obstacles (such as a Jordan River swollen by Spring floods and the mighty armies of Canaanites), God still assured them that they will **come into the land**.

b. **Some of the first of all the produce of the ground:** Num 18:12 speaks of the firstfruits that must be regularly brought to the priests, but the firstfruits described here in Deuteronomy 26 seem to be a special offering of firstfruits, from the first of the harvest they gain in the Promised Land.

c. **Set it down before the altar of the LORD your God:** Firstfruit giving obviously honored the LORD,

because it gave the LORD His portion off the top before any was used for one's self.

2. (5-10) *The words of thanks and praise at the giving of firstfruits.*

And you shall answer and say before the LORD your God: "My father was a Syrian, about to perish, and he went down to Egypt and dwelt there, few in number; and there he became a nation, great, mighty, and populous. But the Egyptians mistreated us, afflicted us, and laid hard bondage on us. Then we cried out to the LORD God of our fathers, and the LORD heard our voice and looked on our affliction and our labor and our oppression. So the LORD brought us out of Egypt with a mighty hand and with an outstretched arm, with great terror and with signs and wonders. He has brought us to this place and has given us this land, 'a land flowing with milk and honey'; and now, behold, I have brought the firstfruits of the land which you, O LORD, have given me." Then you shall set it before the LORD your God, and worship before the LORD your God.

a. **And you shall answer and say before the LORD your God:** This wonderful confession of thanks remembered the history of Israel from the time of Jacob and his family in the land of Canaan, to the family's going down into Egypt, and to the eventual deliverance and Exodus into the Promised Land.

b. **He went down to Egypt and sojourned there:** Israel spent some 400 years in Egypt. Yet in the course of God's eternal plan, it was nothing more than a *sojourn*. We can often focus so much on our own time of trial or misery that we think that it defines our whole life; God saw Israel's experience in Egypt as a *sojourn*.

c. **Few in number; and there he became a nation, great, mighty, and populous:** This was the major reason God had for sending Jacob and his family on their sojourn in Egypt. When they lived in Canaan, there was great risk of the family just assimilating with the wicked, pagan peoples around them. To prevent this, and to allow the nation to grow, God sent them down to Egypt, which was a very racist society, and who would not intermarry with Israel. Therefore, they could go down there **few in number; and there he became a nation, great, mighty, and populous.**

d. **And now, behold, I have brought the firstfruits of the land:** This initial giving of firstfruits when Israel came into the Promised Land was an appropriate way to say “thank you” to the LORD. This giving, and all giving done with the right heart, is a proper way to **worship before the LORD your God.**

3. (11) ***So you shall rejoice.***

So you shall rejoice in every good *thing* which the LORD your God has given to you and your house, you and the Levite and the stranger who *is* among you.

a. **Rejoice in every good thing which the LORD your God has given to you:** When we receive from the LORD, and give back to Him, it makes us rejoice. It is the proper response of a creature to his Creator, who has supplied him with all good things.

4. (12-15) ***The prayer for the giving of the tithe.***

When you have finished laying aside all the tithe of your increase in the third year; the year of tithing; and have given *it* to the Levite, the stranger, the fatherless, and the widow, so that they may eat within your gates and be filled, then you shall say before the LORD your God: “I have removed the holy

tithe from my house, and also have given them to the Levite, the stranger, the fatherless, and the widow, according to all Your commandments which You have commanded me; I have not transgressed Your commandments, nor have I forgotten them. I have not eaten any of it when in mourning, nor have I removed any of it for an unclean use, nor given any of it for the dead. I have obeyed the voice of the LORD my God, and have done according to all that You have commanded me. Look down from Your holy habitation, from heaven, and bless Your people Israel and the land which You have given us, just as You swore to our fathers, 'a land flowing with milk and honey.'"

a. **When you have finished laying aside all the tithe:** The **tithe** was required of Israel every year, but every **third year**, the tithe was given not only to the Levites for their support (as was instructed in Num 18:21-24), but was to be shared by **the Levite, the stranger, the fatherless, and the widow, so they may eat within your gates and be filled.**

b. **Then you shall say:** The prayer described here shows that the giving was done with the right kind of heart. God not only wants us to give, but to give with the right heart.

i. Right giving is done according to God's Word: **According to all Your commandments which you have commanded me.**

ii. Right giving is done within the context of a whole life of obedience: **I have not transgressed Your commandments, nor have I forgotten them.**

iii. **I have not eaten any of it... nor have I removed any of it:** Right giving genuinely sets aside what is to be given unto the LORD.

iv. **Nor given any of it for the dead:** Right giving is not done superstitiously; “Putting food in a grave with a dead body was a common Egyptian and Canaanite practice, which is most likely what the Israelites were not to emulate.” (Kalland)

v. **Look down from Your holy habitation, from heaven, and bless Your people:** Right giving is done with the expectation of blessing.

B. Moses' exhortation to Israel.

1. (16) *A call to complete obedience.*

This day the LORD your God commands you to observe these statutes and judgments; therefore you shall be careful to observe them with all your heart and with all your soul.

a. **This day the LORD your God commands you to observe these statutes and judgments:** Deu 4:1 began this long section with the words *Now, O Israel, listen to the statutes and the judgments which I teach you to observe.* From Deuteronomy chapter 4 through chapter 26, Moses has reminded Israel of God's commands. Now he exhorted them to *keep the commands.*

b. **therefore you shall be careful to observe them:** Sometimes we need to be *instructed* regarding the law of God; sometimes we need to be *reminded* regarding the law of God. But most often, we need to be *exhorted* regarding the law of God. We know what to do, but we need to be encouraged to actually *do it*.

2. (17) *Israel's proclamation.*

Today you have proclaimed the LORD to be your God, and that you will walk in His ways and keep His statutes, His commandments, and His judgments, and that you will obey His voice.

a. **Today you have proclaimed the LORD to be your God:** Israel was to proclaim two things. First, that **the LORD to be their God**. Second, that they **will walk in His ways and keep His statutes**. The two go together, because the identity of our God is always demonstrated by the direction of our obedience.

3. (18-19) *God's proclamation.*

Also today the LORD has proclaimed you to be His special people, just as He promised you, that you should keep all His commandments, and that He will set you high above all nations which He has made, in praise, in name, and in honor, and that you may be a holy people to the LORD your God, just as He has spoken.

a. **The LORD has proclaimed you to be His special people:** Israel's obedience to the LORD would be more than rewarded. God promised that He exalt an obedient Israel, to set them **high above all nations which He has made, in praise, in name, and in honor**.

The Altar on Mount Ebal

Deu 27:1 Then Moses, together with the leaders of Israel, said to the people, "Obey all the instructions that I am giving you today.

Deu 27:2 On the day you cross the Jordan River and enter the land that the LORD your God is giving you, you are to set up some large stones, cover them with plaster,

Deu 27:3 and write on them all these laws and teachings. When you have entered the rich and fertile land that the LORD, the God of your ancestors, promised you,

Deu 27:4 and you are on the other side of the Jordan, set up these stones on Mount Ebal, as I am instructing you today, and cover them with plaster.

Deu 27:5 Build an altar there made of stones that have had no iron tools used on them,

Deu 27:6 because any altar you build for the LORD your God must be made of uncut stones. There you are to offer the sacrifices that are to be burned,

Deu 27:7 and there you are to sacrifice and eat your fellowship offerings and be grateful in the presence of the LORD your God.

Deu 27:8 On the stones covered with plaster write clearly every word of God's laws."

Curses from Mount Ebal

Deu 27:9 Then Moses, together with the levitical priests, said to all the people of Israel, "Give me your attention, people of Israel, and listen to me. Today you have become the people of the LORD your God;

Deu 27:10 so obey him and keep all his laws that I am giving you today."

Deu 27:11 Then Moses said to the people of Israel,

Deu 27:12 "After you have crossed the Jordan, the following tribes are to stand on Mount Gerizim when the

blessings are pronounced on the people: Simeon, Levi, Judah, Issachar, Joseph, and Benjamin.

Deu 27:13 And the following tribes will stand on Mount Ebal when the curses are pronounced: Reuben, Gad, Asher, Zebulun, Dan, and Naphtali.

Deu 27:14 The Levites will speak these words in a loud voice:

Deu 27:15 " 'God's curse on anyone who makes an idol of stone, wood, or metal and secretly worships it; the LORD hates idolatry.' "And all the people will answer, 'Amen!'

Deu 27:16 " 'God's curse on anyone who dishonors his father or mother.' "And all the people will answer, 'Amen!'

Deu 27:17 " 'God's curse on anyone who moves a neighbor's property line.' "And all the people will answer, 'Amen!'

Deu 27:18 " 'God's curse on anyone who leads a blind person in the wrong direction.' "And all the people will answer, 'Amen!'

Deu 27:19 " 'God's curse on anyone who deprives foreigners, orphans, and widows of their rights.' "And all the people will answer, 'Amen!'

Deu 27:20 " 'God's curse on anyone who disgraces his father by having intercourse with any of his father's wives.' "And all the people will answer, 'Amen!'

Deu 27:21 " 'God's curse on anyone who has sexual relations with an animal.' "And all the people will answer, 'Amen!'

Deu 27:22 " 'God's curse on anyone who has intercourse with his sister or half sister.' "And all the people will answer, 'Amen!'

Deu 27:23 " 'God's curse on anyone who has intercourse with his mother-in-law.' "And all the people will answer, 'Amen!'

Deu 27:24 " 'God's curse on anyone who secretly commits murder.' "And all the people will answer, 'Amen!'

Deu 27:25 " 'God's curse on anyone who accepts money to murder an innocent person.' "And all the people will answer, 'Amen!'

Deu 27:26 " 'God's curse on anyone who does not obey all of God's laws and teachings.' "And all the people will answer, 'Amen!'

Deuteronomy 27:1-26

Deuteronomy 27 - Stones of Witness

A. A special altar.

1. (1-8) The command to set up a special altar.

Now Moses, with the elders of Israel, commanded the people, saying: "Keep all the commandments which I command you today. And it shall be, on the day when you cross over the Jordan to the land which the LORD your God is giving you, that you shall set up for yourselves large stones, and whitewash them with lime. You shall write on them all the words of this law, when you have crossed over, that you may enter the land which the LORD your God is giving you, 'a land flowing with milk and honey,' just as the LORD God of your fathers promised you. Therefore it shall be, when you have crossed over the Jordan, that on Mount Ebal you shall set up these stones, which I command you today, and you shall whitewash them with lime. And there you shall build an altar to the LORD your God, an altar of stones; you shall not use an iron tool on them. You shall build with whole stones the altar of the LORD your God, and offer burnt offerings on it to the LORD your God. You shall offer peace offerings, and shall eat there, and rejoice

before the LORD your God. And you shall write very plainly on the stones all the words of this law."

- a. **Keep all the commandments which I command you today:** Moses finished his preaching to the people of Israel, so there was nothing more to say, other than the simple encouragement to *do* what God commanded. It isn't enough for Israel to be hearers of the word; they must also be *doers* of the word.
- b. **There you shall build an altar:** When Israel came into the Promised Land, they were to build a special altar. It was to be made of natural stone, with no **iron tool** used to carve the stones. With these **whole stones** making up the altar, they were also to **write very plainly on the stones all the words of this law.**
 - i. This was a special altar. It was clearly to be used for sacrifice (**You shall offer peace offerings**), but it was also to be a memorial of the law of Moses, and his great sermon to Israel in the book of Deuteronomy.
 - ii. This command was obeyed by Joshua in Jos 8:30-32; there, at **Mount Ebal**, in the Promised Land, Joshua *in the presence of the children of Israel... wrote on the stones a copy of the law of Moses, which he had written.*
 - iii. Probably, what was written was the summation of the law contained in the Ten Commandments.
- c. **An altar of stones; you shall not use an iron tool on them:** This was commanded because God did not want the glory of the stone carver to be the center of attention at His altar. God, at His altar, will share glory with no man - the beauty and attractiveness would be found only in the provision of God, not in any fleshly display.

d. **You shall whitewash them with lime:** So, the words could be easily seen, they were to **whitewash them with lime**. Anything we can do to make God's word more accessible to others is a good thing, as long as the integrity of God's word is preserved.

i. Any time God's word is presented, it must be presented **very plainly**. Every preacher and teacher must endeavor to make the Word of God plain.

2. (9-10) ***This day you have become the people of the LORD your God.***

Then Moses and the priests, the Levites, spoke to all Israel, saying, "Take heed and listen, O Israel: This day you have become the people of the LORD your God. Therefore you shall obey the voice of the LORD your God, and observe His commandments and His statutes which I command you today."

a. **Then Moses and the priests, the Levites, spoke to all Israel:** Much of the book of Deuteronomy is written after the same pattern as ancient agreements between kings and their subjects. Here, the idea is clear: God is the king, and the people of Israel are His subjects. He has told them what He expects of them, and what they may expect from Him.

b. **This day you have become the people of the LORD your God:** Now that the agreement was settled, and it could be said to Israel, "**you have become the people of the LORD your God.**" The contract was signed, and Israel willingly submitted itself to the Lord God, recognizing Him as their king.

c. **You shall obey the voice of the LORD your God, and observe His commandments and His statutes:** If the LORD is our king, then it is fitting that we obey

Him this way. Moses, and all the leadership of Israel simply declared a fact that was obvious to everyone.

B. The command to announce the curses from Mount Ebal.

1. (11-13) *The division of the tribes between the two mountains.*

And Moses commanded the people on the same day, saying, "These shall stand on Mount Gerizim to bless the people, when you have crossed over the Jordan: Simeon, Levi, Judah, Issachar, Joseph, and Benjamin; and these shall stand on Mount Ebal to curse: Reuben, Gad, Asher, Zebulun, Dan, and Naphtali."

a. **These shall stand on Mount Gerizim... and these shall stand on Mount Ebal:** When Israel came into the Promised Land, they were to separate the tribes according to these two groups. One group would gather on **Mount Gerizim**, and they would **bless the people**. The other group would stand on **Mount Ebal** and they would **curse** those who disobeyed the law of God.

b. **To bless the people... to curse:** This dramatic scene was fulfilled in Jos 8:32-35. In Joshua's day, it happened after a bitter defeat, then a dramatic repentance and recovery at Ai (Joshua chapters 7 and 8). After the victory at Ai, Joshua wanted to do everything he could to walk in obedience, so he led the nation in obedience to this command in Deuteronomy 27.

i. In this, Joshua was showing himself to be a man of the Book, and Israel a people of the Book; they would order their lives after God's Word. This was done even at some cost or inconvenience; the distance from Ai to Ebal and Gerizim was not small distance to move all the tribes of Israel (from 20 to 25 miles).

ii. The rest of the chapter declares the curses; but where is the declaration of blessing? "The absence of a list of blessings may simply mean that they were omitted, since they would have corresponded with the curses except that they negated everyone in turn. Those who were blessed did not offend in the areas in which those who were cursed did." (Thompson)

c. **These shall stand on Mount Gerizim... and these shall stand on Mount Ebal:** God commanded this "open-air-audience-participation-sermon" to happen at **Mount Gerizim** and **Mount Ebal** for several important reasons.

i. This would be a beautiful place to do this. The whole nation could hear this reading of the Law because the area has a natural amphitheater effect because of the contour of the hills.

ii. Because Gerizim and Ebal were in the geographic middle of the Promised Land, Israel had to control the middle of Canaan and the highlands to have the luxury of such an assembly at these mountains.

iii. Finally, the mountains themselves were pictures of blessing and cursing: "On all hands it is allowed that *Gerizim* abounds with springs, gardens, and orchards, and that it is covered with a beautiful verdure, while *Ebal* is as *naked* and barren as a rock." (Clarke)

2. (14-26) *The declaration of the curses.*

And the Levites shall speak with a loud voice and say to all the men of Israel:

"Cursed is the one who makes a carved or molded image, an abomination to the LORD, the work of the hands of the craftsman, and sets it up in secret." And all the people shall answer and say, "Amen!"

“Cursed is the one who treats his father or his mother with contempt.” And all the people shall say, “Amen!”

“Cursed is the one who moves his neighbor’s landmark.” And all the people shall say, “Amen!”

“Cursed is the one who makes the blind to wander off the road.” And all the people shall say, “Amen!”

“Cursed is the one who perverts the justice due the stranger, the fatherless, and widow.” And all the people shall say, “Amen!”

“Cursed is the one who lies with his father’s wife, because he has uncovered his father’s bed.” And all the people shall say, “Amen!”

“Cursed is the one who lies with any kind of animal.” And all the people shall say, “Amen!”

“Cursed is the one who lies with his sister, the daughter of his father or the daughter of his mother.” And all the people shall say, “Amen!”

“Cursed is the one who lies with his mother-in-law.” And all the people shall say, “Amen!”

“Cursed is the one who attacks his neighbor secretly.” And all the people shall say, “Amen!”

“Cursed is the one who takes a bribe to slay an innocent person.” And all the people shall say, “Amen!”

“Cursed is the one who does not confirm *all* the words of this law.” And all the people shall say, “Amen!”

a. **The Levites shall speak with a loud voice:** This would make a remarkable impression. The Levites declared curses upon those who break the covenant, and people answered **Amen!** to every declaration.

- i. It is good to remind ourselves that the word **Amen!***means* something. It means "so be it." Every **Amen!** was a conscious agreement with the declaration of a curse.
- b. **Cursed is the one who:** The Levites declared, and the people agreed to, curses upon those who break God's law.
 - i. Curses upon idolaters (**the one who makes any carved or molded image**).
 - ii. Curses upon those who dishonor their parents (**the one who treats his father or his mother with contempt**).
 - iii. Curses upon those who steal (**the one who moves his neighbor's landmark**).
 - iv. Curses upon those who are simply cruel (**the one who makes the blind to wander off the road**).
 - v. Curses upon **the one who perverts the justice due the stranger, the fatherless, and widow**.
 - vi. Curses upon those who disobey God's sexual standards (regarding incest and bestiality).
 - vii. Curses upon the violent (**the one who attacks his neighbor secretly**).
 - viii. Curses upon those who cheat the courts (**the one who takes a bribe to slay an innocent person**).
- c. **Cursed is the one who does not confirm all the words of this law:** Finally - if one believes they have escaped these curses - there was a curse pronounced upon **the one who does not conform to all the words of this law**. Even if somehow, we have escaped all the previous curses, none can

conform to all the words of this law.

- i. When all are found guilty before the law, and it is clear that they cannot **conform to all the words of this law**, there is still hope. A clue to this hope is found in the beginning of the chapter, where God declared that an altar be built - not upon Mount Gerizim, the mountain of blessing, but upon Mount Ebal, the mountain of cursing. We need the covering and atoning sacrifice exactly at the point where our sin and failures are revealed and God's curse is pronounced on our sin.
- ii. It is important to recognize that we, in Jesus Christ, do not have an Old Covenant relationship with God. We expect to be blessed, not because of our obedience, but because of our position in Jesus. The curse we deserved was laid upon Him (Gal 3:10-14). Though there may be an inherent curse of consequences in our disobedience, or even the correcting hand of God, under the New Covenant, He does not punish us or curse us - because all that we deserved, past, present, and future, was poured out upon Jesus.

Blessings for Obedience

Deu 28:1 "If you obey the LORD your God and faithfully keep all his commands that I am giving you today, he will make you greater than any other nation on earth.

Deu 28:2 Obey the LORD your God and all these blessings will be yours:

Deu 28:3 "The LORD will bless your towns and your fields.

Deu 28:4 "The LORD will bless you with many children, with abundant crops, and with many cattle and sheep.

Deu 28:5 "The LORD will bless your grain crops and the food you prepare from them.

Deu 28:6 "The LORD will bless everything you do.

Deu 28:7 "The LORD will defeat your enemies when they attack you. They will attack from one direction, but they will run from you in all directions.

Deu 28:8 "The LORD your God will bless your work and fill your barns with grain. He will bless you in the land that he is giving you.

Deu 28:9 "If you obey the LORD your God and do everything he commands, he will make you his own people, as he has promised.

Deu 28:10 Then all the peoples on earth will see that the LORD has chosen you to be his own people, and they will be afraid of you.

Deu 28:11 The LORD will give you many children, many cattle, and abundant crops in the land that he promised your ancestors to give you.

Deu 28:12 He will send rain in season from his rich storehouse in the sky and bless all your work, so that you will lend to many nations, but you will not have to borrow from any.

Deu 28:13 The LORD your God will make you the leader among the nations and not a follower; you will always prosper and never fail if you obey faithfully all his commands that I am giving you today.

Deu 28:14 But you must never disobey them in any way, or worship and serve other gods.

Curses for Disobedience

Deu 28:15 "But if you disobey the LORD your God and do not faithfully keep all his commands and laws that I am giving you today, all these evil things will happen to you:

Deu 28:16 "The LORD will curse your towns and your fields.

Deu 28:17 "The LORD will curse your grain crops and the food you prepare from them.

Deu 28:18 "The LORD will curse you by giving you only a few children, poor crops, and few cattle and sheep.

Deu 28:19 "The LORD will curse everything you do.

Deu 28:20 "If you do evil and reject the LORD, he will bring on you disaster, confusion, and trouble in everything you do, until you are quickly and completely destroyed.

Deu 28:21 He will send disease after disease on you until there is not one of you left in the land that you are about to occupy.

Deu 28:22 The LORD will strike you with infectious diseases, with swelling and fever; he will send drought and scorching winds to destroy your crops. These disasters will be with you until you die.

Deu 28:23 No rain will fall, and your ground will become as hard as iron.

Deu 28:24 Instead of rain, the LORD will send down duststorms and sandstorms until you are destroyed.

Deu 28:25 "The LORD will give your enemies victory over you. You will attack them from one direction, but you will run from them in all directions, and all the people on earth will be terrified when they see what happens to you.

Deu 28:26 When you die, birds and wild animals will come and eat your bodies, and there will be no one to scare them off.

Deu 28:27 The LORD will send boils on you, as he did on the Egyptians. He will make your bodies break out with sores. You will be covered with scabs, and you will itch, but there will be no cure.

Deu 28:28 The LORD will make you lose your mind; he will strike you with blindness and confusion.

Deu 28:29 You will grope about in broad daylight like someone blind, and you will not be able to find your way.

You will not prosper in anything you do. You will be constantly oppressed and robbed, and there will be no one to help you.

Deu 28:30 "You will be engaged to a young woman—but someone else will marry her. You will build a house—but never live in it. You will plant a vineyard—but never eat its grapes.

Deu 28:31 Your cattle will be butchered before your very eyes, but you will not eat any of the meat. Your donkeys will be dragged away while you look on, and they will not be given back to you. Your sheep will be given to your enemies, and there will be no one to help you.

Deu 28:32 Your sons and daughters will be given as slaves to foreigners while you look on. Every day you will strain your eyes, looking in vain for your children to return.

Deu 28:33 A foreign nation will take all the crops that you have worked so hard to grow, while you receive nothing but constant oppression and harsh treatment.

Deu 28:34 Your sufferings will make you lose your mind.

Deu 28:35 The LORD will cover your legs with incurable, painful sores; boils will cover you from head to foot.

Deu 28:36 "The LORD will take you and your king away to a foreign land, where neither you nor your ancestors ever lived before; there you will serve gods made of wood and stone.

Deu 28:37 In the countries to which the LORD will scatter you, the people will be shocked at what has happened to you; they will make fun of you and ridicule you.

Deu 28:38 "You will plant plenty of seed, but reap only a small harvest, because the locusts will eat your crops.

Deu 28:39 You will plant vineyards and take care of them, but you will not gather their grapes or drink wine from them, because worms will eat the vines.

Deu 28:40 Olive trees will grow everywhere in your land, but you will not have any olive oil, because the olives will drop off.

Deu 28:41 You will have sons and daughters, but you will lose them, because they will be taken away as prisoners of war.

Deu 28:42 All your trees and crops will be devoured by insects.

Deu 28:43 "Foreigners who live in your land will gain more and more power, while you gradually lose yours.

Deu 28:44 They will have money to lend you, but you will have none to lend them. In the end they will be your rulers.

Deu 28:45 "All these disasters will come on you, and they will be with you until you are destroyed, because you did not obey the LORD your God and keep all the laws that he gave you.

Deu 28:46 They will be the evidence of God's judgment on you and your descendants forever.

Deu 28:47 The LORD blessed you in every way, but you would not serve him with glad and joyful hearts.

Deu 28:48 So then, you will serve the enemies that the LORD is going to send against you. You will be hungry, thirsty, and naked—in need of everything. The LORD will oppress you harshly until you are destroyed.

Deu 28:49 The LORD will bring against you a nation from the ends of the earth, a nation whose language you do not know. They will swoop down on you like an eagle.

Deu 28:50 They will be ruthless and show no mercy to anyone, young or old.

Deu 28:51 They will eat your livestock and your crops, and you will starve to death. They will not leave you any grain, wine, olive oil, cattle, or sheep; and you will die.

Deu 28:52 They will attack every town in the land that the LORD your God is giving you, and the high, fortified walls in which you trust will fall.

Deu 28:53 "When your enemies are besieging your towns, you will become so desperate for food that you will even eat the children that the LORD your God has given you.

Deu 28:54 (54-55) Even the most refined man of noble birth will become so desperate during the siege that he will eat some of his own children because he has no other food. He will not even give any to his brother or to the wife he loves or to any of his children who are left.

Deu 28:56 (56-57) Even the most refined woman of noble birth, so rich that she has never had to walk anywhere, will behave in the same way. When the enemy besieges her town, she will become so desperate for food that she will secretly eat her newborn child and the afterbirth as well. She will not share them with the husband she loves or with any of her children.

Deu 28:58 "If you do not obey faithfully all of God's teachings that are written in this book and if you do not honor the wonderful and awesome name of the LORD your God,

Deu 28:59 he will send on you and on your descendants incurable diseases and horrible epidemics that can never be stopped.

Deu 28:60 He will bring on you once again all the dreadful diseases you experienced in Egypt, and you will never recover.

Deu 28:61 He will also send all kinds of diseases and epidemics that are not mentioned in this book of God's laws and teachings, and you will be destroyed.

Deu 28:62 Although you become as numerous as the stars in the sky, only a few of you will survive, because you did not obey the LORD your God.

Deu 28:63 Just as the LORD took delight in making you prosper and in making you increase in number, so he will take delight in destroying you and in bringing ruin on you. You will be uprooted from the land that you are about to occupy.

Deu 28:64 "The LORD will scatter you among all the nations, from one end of the earth to the other, and there you will serve gods made of wood and stone, gods that neither you nor your ancestors have ever worshiped before.

Deu 28:65 You will find no peace anywhere, no place to call your own; the LORD will overwhelm you with anxiety, hopelessness, and despair.

Deu 28:66 Your life will always be in danger. Day and night you will be filled with terror, and you will live in constant fear of death.

Deu 28:67 Your hearts will pound with fear at everything you see. Every morning you will wish for evening; every evening you will wish for morning.

Deu 28:68 The LORD will send you back to Egypt in ships, even though he said that you would never have to go there again. There you will try to sell yourselves to your enemies as slaves, but no one will want to buy you."

Deuteronomy 28:1-68

Deuteronomy 28 - Blessing and Cursing

A. Blessings on obedience.

1. (1-2) Overtaken by blessing.

Now it shall come to pass, if you diligently obey the voice of the LORD your God, to observe carefully all His commandments which I command you today, that the LORD your God will set you high above all nations of the earth. And all these blessings shall come upon

you and overtake you, because you obey the voice of the LORD your God:

a. **If you diligently obey the voice of the LORD:** The word “**if**” looms large. In this chapter, Moses exhorted the nation with *choice*. The covenant God made with Israel contained three major features: The *law*, the *sacrifice*, and the *choice*.

i. The idea behind the *choice* is that God was determined to reveal Himself to the world through Israel. He would do this either by making them so blessed that the world would know only God could have blessed them so; or by making them so cursed that only God could have cursed them and cause them to still survive. The choice was up to Israel.

ii. As a literary form, this chapter is similar to ancient treaties between a king and his people; this is God the King, making a covenant with His people, Israel.

iii. “In the ancient Near East it was customary for legal treaties to conclude with passages containing blessings upon those who observed the enactments, and curses upon those who did not.” (Harrison)

b. **That the LORD your God will set you high above all nations of the earth:** Therefore, if Israel would obey the LORD, He would **set** them **high above all nations of the earth**, and the blessings would be so powerful that they would **come upon you and overtake you**. They wouldn’t be able to *escape* the blessings.

2. (3-14) *God will richly bless Israel’s obedience to the covenant.*

Blessed shall you be in the city, and blessed shall you be in the country.

Blessed shall be the fruit of your body, the produce of your ground and the increase of your herds, the

increase of your cattle and the offspring of your flocks.

Blessed shall be your basket and your kneading bowl. Blessed shall you be when you come in, and blessed shall you be when you go out.

The LORD will cause your enemies who rise against you to be defeated before your face; they shall come out against you one way and flee before you seven ways. The LORD will command the blessing on you in your storehouses and in all to which you set your hand, and He will bless you in the land which the LORD your God is giving you. The LORD will establish you as a holy people to Himself, just as He has sworn to you, if you keep the commandments of the LORD your God and walk in His ways. Then all peoples of the earth shall see that you are called by the name of the LORD, and they shall be afraid of you. And the LORD will grant you plenty of goods, in the fruit of your body, in the increase of your livestock, and in the produce of your ground, in the land of which the LORD swore to your fathers to give you. The LORD will open to you His good treasure, the heavens, to give the rain to your land in its season, and to bless all the work of your hand. You shall lend to many nations, but you shall not borrow. And the LORD will make you the head and not the tail; you shall be above only, and not be beneath, if you heed the commandments of the LORD your God, which I command you today, and are careful to observe *them*. So you shall not turn aside from any of the words which I command you this day, to the right or the left, to go after other gods to serve them.

a. **Blessed shall you be:** An obedient Israel would be blessed everywhere: **In the city... in the country... when you come in... when you go out.** An obedient

Israel would be blessed in their homes and in their farms, and in their kitchens (**the fruit of your body... the produce of your ground and the increase of your herds... Blessed shall be your basket and your kneading bowl**).

b. **They shall come out against you one way and flee before you seven ways:** An obedient Israel would be blessed in warfare. This degree of blessing speaks of a clearly Divine blessing.

c. **The LORD will establish you as a holy people to Himself:** Perhaps the best blessing had to do with Israel's own relationship with God. God would separate an obedient Israel unto Himself, speaking of a special relationship. If not for this, all the material blessings described previously would be empty.

d. **All the peoples of the earth shall see that you are called by the name of the LORD... the LORD will make you the head and not the tail; you shall be above only, and not be beneath:** God's purpose in blessing Israel was greater than just enriching the nation for its own sake. He intended to glorify Himself through blessing them.

i. When Israel walked after the LORD, these blessings were real; one example of this is when the Queen of Sheba came to Solomon and saw a nation so blessed, she knew it had to be of God (1Ki 10:1-13).

B. Curses on disobedience.

1. (15) *Introduction to the curses.*

But it shall come to pass, if you do not obey the voice of the LORD your God, to observe carefully all His commandments and His statutes which I command you today, that all these curses will come upon you and overtake you:

- a. **If you do not obey the voice of the LORD your God:** The covenant's aspect of the *choice* was a sword with two edges. Obedience would carry great blessing, but disobedience would carry terrible curses.
- b. **All these curses will come upon you and overtake you:** Like the blessings for an obedient Israel, the curses for a disobedient Israel would be inevitable.
- c. **All these curses:** The rest of the chapter is almost overwhelming. "Actually, a logical analysis of the chapter is almost impossible, since the final aim was not to be logical but to build up a vivid impression by presenting picture after picture until the hearer could see and feel the import of the preacher's words." (Thompson)

2. (16-68) *The curses upon Israel's disobedience.*

Cursed shall you be in the city, and cursed shall you be in the country.

**Cursed shall be your basket and your kneading bowl.
Cursed shall be the fruit of your body and the produce of your land, the increase of your cattle and the offspring of your flocks.**

Cursed shall you be when you come in, and cursed shall you be when you go out.

The LORD will send on you cursing, confusion, and rebuke in all that you set your hand to do, until you are destroyed and until you perish quickly, because of the wickedness of your doings in which you have forsaken Me. The LORD will make the plague cling to you until He has consumed you from the land which you are going to possess. The LORD will strike you with consumption, with fever, with inflammation, with severe burning fever, with the sword, with scorching, and with mildew; they shall pursue you until you perish. And your heavens which are over your head shall be bronze, and the earth which is

under you *shall* be iron. The LORD will change the rain of your land to powder and dust; from the heaven it shall come down on you until you are destroyed. The LORD will cause you to be defeated before your enemies; you shall go out one way against them and flee seven ways before them; and you shall become troublesome to all the kingdoms of the earth. Your carcasses shall be food for all the birds of the air and the beasts of the earth, and no one shall frighten *them* away. The LORD will strike you with the boils of Egypt, with tumors, with the scab, and with the itch, from which you cannot be healed. The LORD will strike you with madness and blindness and confusion of heart. And you shall grope at noonday, as a blind man gropes in darkness; you shall not prosper in your ways; you shall be only oppressed and plundered continually, and no one shall save you. You shall betroth a wife, but another man shall lie with her; you shall build a house, but you shall not dwell in it; you shall plant a vineyard, but shall not gather its grapes. Your ox *shall* be slaughtered before your eyes, but you shall not eat of it; your donkey *shall* be violently taken away from before you, and shall not be restored to you; your sheep *shall* be given to your enemies, and you shall have no one to rescue *them*. Your sons and your daughters *shall* be given to another people, and your eyes shall look and fail *with longing* for them all day long; and *there shall* be no strength in your hand. A nation whom you have not known shall eat the fruit of your land and the produce of your labor, and you shall be only oppressed and crushed continually. So you shall be driven mad because of the sight which your eyes see. The LORD will strike you in the knees and on the legs with severe boils which cannot be healed, and from the sole of your foot to the top of your head. The LORD will bring you

and the king whom you set over you to a nation which neither you nor your fathers have known, and there you shall serve other gods; wood and stone. And you shall become an astonishment, a proverb, and a byword among all nations where the LORD will drive you. You shall carry much seed out to the field but gather little in, for the locust shall consume it. You shall plant vineyards and tend *them*, but you shall neither drink of the wine nor gather the *grapes*; for the worms shall eat them. You shall have olive trees throughout all your territory, but you shall not anoint *yourself* with the oil; for your olives shall drop off. You shall beget sons and daughters, but they shall not be yours; for they shall go into captivity. Locusts shall consume all your trees and the produce of your land. The alien who *is* among you shall rise higher and higher above you, and you shall come down lower and lower. He shall lend to you, but you shall not lend to him; he shall be the head, and you shall be the tail. Moreover all these curses shall come upon you and pursue and overtake you, until you are destroyed, because you did not obey the voice of the LORD your God, to keep His commandments and His statutes which He commanded you. And they shall be upon you for a sign and a wonder, and on your descendants forever. Because you did not serve the LORD your God with joy and gladness of heart, for the abundance of everything, therefore you shall serve your enemies, whom the LORD will send against you, in hunger, in thirst, in nakedness, and in need of everything; and He will put a yoke of iron on your neck until He has destroyed you. The LORD will bring a nation against you from afar, from the end of the earth, as *swift* as the eagle flies, a nation whose language you will not understand, a nation of fierce countenance, which does not respect the elderly nor

show favor to the young. And they shall eat the increase of your livestock and the produce of your land, until you are destroyed; they shall not leave you grain or new wine or oil, or the increase of your cattle or the offspring of your flocks, until they have destroyed you. They shall besiege you at all your gates until your high and fortified walls, in which you trust, come down throughout all your land; and they shall besiege you at all your gates throughout all your land which the LORD your God has given you. You shall eat the fruit of your own body, the flesh of your sons and your daughters whom the LORD your God has given you, in the siege and desperate straits in which your enemy shall distress you. The sensitive and very refined man among you will be hostile toward his brother, toward the wife of his bosom, and toward the rest of his children whom he leaves behind, so that he will not give any of them the flesh of his children whom he will eat, because he has nothing left in the siege and desperate straits in which your enemy shall distress you at all your gates. The tender and delicate woman among you, who would not venture to set the sole of her foot on the ground because of her delicateness and sensitivity, will refuse to the husband of her bosom, and to her son and her daughter, her placenta which comes out from between her feet and her children whom she bears; for she will eat them secretly for lack of everything in the siege and desperate straits in which your enemy shall distress you at all your gates. If you do not carefully observe all the words of this law that are written in this book, that you may fear this glorious and awesome name, THE LORD YOUR GOD, then the LORD will bring upon you and your descendants extraordinary plagues; great and prolonged plagues; and serious and prolonged

sicknesses. Moreover He will bring back on you all the diseases of Egypt, of which you were afraid, and they shall cling to you. Also every sickness and every plague, which is not written in this Book of the Law, will the LORD bring upon you until you are destroyed. You shall be left few in number, whereas you were as the stars of heaven in multitude, because you would not obey the voice of the LORD your God. And it shall be, that just as the LORD rejoiced over you to do you good and multiply you, so the LORD will rejoice over you to destroy you and bring you to nothing; and you shall be plucked from off the land which you go to possess. Then the LORD will scatter you among all peoples, from one end of the earth to the other, and there you shall serve other gods, which neither you nor your fathers have known; wood and stone. And among those nations you shall find no rest, nor shall the sole of your foot have a resting place; but there the LORD will give you a trembling heart, failing eyes, and anguish of soul. Your life shall hang in doubt before you; you shall fear day and night, and have no assurance of life. In the morning you shall say, "Oh, that it were evening!" And at evening you shall say, "Oh, that it were morning!" because of the fear which terrifies your heart, and because of the sight which your eyes see. And the LORD will take you back to Egypt in ships, by the way of which I said to you, "You shall never see it again." And there you shall be offered for sale to your enemies as male and female slaves, but no one will buy you.

- a. **In the city... in the country... when you come in... when you go out:** A disobedient Israel would be cursed everywhere.
- b. **The fruit of your body... the produce of your ground and the increase of your herds... Cursed**

shall be your basket and your kneading bowl: A disobedient Israel would be cursed in their homes, their farms, and in their kitchens.

c. **Plague... consumption... fever... the boils of Egypt... the scab... the itch... madness and blindness and confusion of heart:** A disobedient Israel would be cursed in their health.

d. **Your heavens... shall be bronze... the LORD will change the rain of your land to powder and dust:** A disobedient Israel would be cursed in their weather.

e. **To be defeated before your enemies:** A disobedient Israel would be cursed in warfare.

f. **You shall betroth a wife, but another man shall lie with her... Your ox shall be slaughtered before your eyes, but you shall not eat of it... Your sons and your daughters shall be given to another people:** A disobedient Israel would be cursed by simple, terrible injustices and tragedies. All of these tragedies would bring a terrible result: **you shall be driven mad because of the sight which your eyes see.**

g. **The LORD will bring a nation against you from afar:** A disobedient Israel would be attacked and conquered by **a nation of fierce countenance**, and they would fight **until they have destroyed you.**

i. **You shall eat the fruit of your own body:** This became horribly true in the days of the later kingdom. 2Ki 6:24-30 describes a famine so severe in a besieged Israelite city that there was a fight between two women over eating their children! A terrible fulfillment of the promise, **he will not give any of the flesh of his children whom he will eat.** Lam 4:1-11 vividly describes the horrors of the siege of Jerusalem.

h. The LORD will scatter you among all the peoples, from one end of the earth to the other: In the end, Israel would be dispersed. We find that because of their disobedience, these curses became the history of the nation of Israel.

i. Of course, many of these horrible curses upon a disobedient Israel were fulfilled in the years of history recorded in the Old Testament; but their fulfillment did not end with the end of Bible history, Old or New Testament.

ii. For example, around 68 A.D. the Romans finally had enough of the rebellious Jews in their province of Judea, so they laid siege to Jerusalem. At the time, the Jews fervently expected the coming of the Messiah to save them and conquer the Romans, based on God's promise to destroy the armies laying siege to Jerusalem in Zec 12:1-9. Sadly, the Jews of that time refused to fulfill Zec 12:10 which described their humble, repentant embrace of a pierced Messiah.

ii. Nevertheless the Jews of that day were so confident of Messiah's coming that their factions actually fought each other and burned each other's food, trying to be the most powerful group when the Messiah came. According to Josephus, it was "as though they were purposely serving the Romans by destroying what the city had provided against a siege and severing the sinews of their own strength" (*Wars* 5.24). "Through famine certainly the city fell, a fate which would have been practically impossible, had they not prepared the way for it themselves." (*Wars* 5.26)

iii. When the Roman general Vespasian came to Jerusalem, the Jewish factions were busy fighting

each other. His staff urged him to attack immediately, but he knew that an attack would instantly unite the Jews. So he held back and let them destroy each other for as long as possible. He said that God was a better general than he, and that He was delivering the Jews into the hands of the Romans. Before Jerusalem was attacked, Vespasian became emperor, and he put his son Titus in charge of the attack.

iv. In contrast, Christians in Jerusalem heeded the words of Jesus in Luk 21:20-24, in which He told people to flee Jerusalem when it was *surrounded by armies*, because *the days of vengeance* were at hand.

v. In this siege of Jerusalem hunger became so great that many tried to escape the walls and forage for food. Five hundred or more were captured and crucified daily. "The soldiers out of rage and hatred amused themselves by nailing their prisoners in different postures; and so great was their numbers, that space could not be found for the crosses nor crosses for the bodies." (War 5.451) More than 600,000 died from starvation, and their dead bodies were dumped over the walls of the city. In total more than a million died and 97,000 were captured, with most of the captives being shipped as slaves to Egypt. The promise of Deu 28:68 was tragically fulfilled: **you shall be offered for sale to your enemies as male and female slaves, but no one will buy you.** This happened as too many Jewish slaves glutted the Egyptian slave market, and no one could buy all the available slaves.

vi. After the conquest the Jews still living in Judea were continually subjugated and humiliated by the Romans. The Romans continued to collect the temple tax from the Jews, even though their temple had

been completely destroyed. So the Romans took the temple tax and used it to support their *pagan* temples.

vii. After some years of this, the Jews of Judea rebelled against the Romans again in 132 A.D. with a man named bar-Kochoba leading the fight. He was proclaimed messiah by the rabbis who supported the revolt. But after the bar-Kochoba rebellion, Rome finally and utterly crushed the Jewish population of Judea. Josephus said that as a result of the many battles, the once beautiful land was destroyed, and that it could not even be recognized.

viii. But the curse for Israel had not ended. Now, tragically, the church and Christians turned on the Jews. It was as if the branches of the tree attacked their own root. As the church gained in political power and became the official religion of the Roman Empire, the church decided to attack the Jews.

ix. They did this in part as retribution for the distant early years of Jewish persecution of the Christians. It was also because the current Jewish rejection of Jesus as Messiah was thought so offensive. But the greatest motivation was a bizarre evangelistic strategy. Christians thought, "The Jews are cursed because they have killed their Messiah. The curses are meant to turn the heart of the nation back to God. We will help God by being His instrument to curse the Jewish people."

x. For centuries, the worst enemies Jews ever had were the Christians who thought they could help God by cursing the Jewish people. At one time in Medieval Rome, the Pope commanded a procession of the Jews through the city, where they presented a scroll of the Old Testament to the Pope. He received the scroll and

said, "Beautiful law; wretched people." The shameful history of the Church against the Jews is recorded in the story of the Crusades, the slaughters, and the ghettos.

xi. This helps to explain the great corruption and lack of spiritual power in the church through the Dark Ages. God promised to Abraham and his covenant descendants, the Jewish people, *I will bless those who bless you, and curse him who curses you* (Gen 12:3). Satan's clever, and powerful strategy to curse the church was effective: Curse the church by inspiring them to curse the Jewish people. Just as God judged Assyria, Babylon, Rome, and Germany for their mistreatment of the Jewish people, so the church was cursed as long as it persecuted the Jews. The church ignorantly disregarded the words of Jesus in Mat 18:7 : *For offenses must come, but woe to that man by whom the offense comes!* If the Jewish people were to be cursed, it was God's business, not the Church's business!

xii. "They have, it is true, grievously sinned; but, O ye Christians, have they not grievously suffered for it? Is not the stroke of God heavy enough upon them? Do not then, by any unkind treatment or cruel oppression, increase their miseries. They are, above all others, the men who have seen affliction by the stroke of his rod." (Adam Clarke, 1811)

xiii. Gloriously, the curse was not and is not the end of God's plan for the Jewish people. As Ezekiel 37 describes, God will - and has begun to - revive the Jewish people as back from the dead and prepare them to be used in these last days. God is not done with Israel, and the curse *will not* be their final legacy.

i. **You shall become an astonishment, a proverb, and a byword among all nations where the LORD will drive you:** Even as with the blessings, God's purpose in cursing Israel would be greater than just immediately punishing them for their sin. It was to be a witness to the nations.

i. God would do this for His glory, and because it would glorify Him, it can even be said that He would *rejoice* in the work: **just as the LORD rejoiced over you to do you good and multiply you, so the LORD will rejoice over you to destroy you and bring you to nothing.**

ii. "For though he doth not delight in the death of a sinner in itself, yet he doth doubtless delight in the glorifying of his justice upon incorrigible sinners, seeing the exercise of all his attributes must needs please him, else he were not perfectly happy." (Poole)

The Covenant Renewed in Moab

Deu 29:1 These are the terms of the covenant that the LORD commanded Moses to make with the people of Israel in the land of Moab; all this was in addition to the covenant which the LORD had made with them at Mount Sinai.

Deu 29:2 Moses called together all the people of Israel and said to them, "You saw for yourselves what the LORD did to the king of Egypt, to his officials, and to his entire country.

Deu 29:3 You saw the terrible plagues, the miracles, and the great wonders that the LORD performed.

Deu 29:4 But to this very day he has not let you understand what you have experienced.

Deu 29:5 For forty years the LORD led you through the desert, and your clothes and sandals never wore out.

Deu 29:6 You did not have bread to eat or wine or beer to drink, but the LORD provided for your needs in order to

teach you that he is your God.

Deu 29:7 And when we came to this place, King Sihon of Heshbon and King Og of Bashan came out to fight against us. But we defeated them,

Deu 29:8 took their land, and divided it among the tribes of Reuben and Gad, and half the tribe of Manasseh.

Deu 29:9 Obey faithfully all the terms of this covenant, so that you will be successful in everything you do.

Deu 29:10 "Today you are standing in the presence of the LORD your God, all of you—your leaders and officials, your men,

Deu 29:11 women, and children, and the foreigners who live among you and cut wood and carry water for you.

Deu 29:12 You are here today to enter into this covenant that the LORD your God is making with you and to accept its obligations,

Deu 29:13 so that the LORD may now confirm you as his people and be your God, as he promised you and your ancestors, Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob.

Deu 29:14 You are not the only ones with whom the LORD is making this covenant with its obligations.

Deu 29:15 He is making it with all of us who stand here in his presence today and also with our descendants who are not yet born.

Deu 29:16 "You remember what life was like in Egypt and what it was like to travel through the territory of other nations.

Deu 29:17 You saw their disgusting idols made of wood, stone, silver, and gold.

Deu 29:18 Make sure that no man, woman, family, or tribe standing here today turns from the LORD our God to worship the gods of other nations. This would be like a root that grows to be a bitter and poisonous plant.

Deu 29:19 Make sure that there is no one here today who hears these solemn demands and yet convinces himself that all will be well with him, even if he stubbornly goes his own way. That would destroy all of you, good and evil alike.

Deu 29:20 The LORD will not forgive such a man. Instead, the LORD's burning anger will flame up against him, and all the disasters written in this book will fall on him until the LORD has destroyed him completely.

Deu 29:21 The LORD will make an example of him before all the tribes of Israel and will bring disaster on him in accordance with all the curses listed in the covenant that is written in this book of the LORD's teachings.

Deu 29:22 "In future generations your descendants and foreigners from distant lands will see the disasters and sufferings that the LORD has brought on your land.

Deu 29:23 The fields will be a barren waste, covered with sulfur and salt; nothing will be planted, and not even weeds will grow there. Your land will be like the cities of Sodom and Gomorrah, of Admah and Zeboiim, which the LORD destroyed when he was furiously angry.

Deu 29:24 Then the whole world will ask, 'Why did the LORD do this to their land? What was the reason for his fierce anger?'

Deu 29:25 And the answer will be, 'It is because the LORD's people broke the covenant they had made with him, the God of their ancestors, when he brought them out of Egypt.

Deu 29:26 They served other gods that they had never worshiped before, gods that the LORD had forbidden them to worship.

Deu 29:27 And so the LORD became angry with his people and brought on their land all the disasters written in this book.

Deu 29:28 The LORD became furiously angry, and in his great anger he uprooted them from their land and threw them into a foreign land, and there they are today.'

Deu 29:29 "There are some things that the LORD our God has kept secret; but he has revealed his Law, and we and our descendants are to obey it forever.

Deuteronomy 29:1-29

Deuteronomy 29 - Renewal of the Covenant

A. God's mighty works for Israel.

1. (1) *The covenant in the land of Moab.*

These are the words of the covenant which the LORD commanded Moses to make with the children of Israel in the land of Moab, besides the covenant which He made with them in Horeb.

a. **These are the words of the covenant:** Some 40 years before this, at **Horeb** (Mount Sinai), Israel made a covenant with God: *Then he took the Book of the Covenant and read in the hearing of the people. And they said, "All that the LORD has said we will do, and be obedient."* And Moses took the blood, sprinkled it on the people, and said, *"This is the blood of the covenant which the LORD has made with you according to all these words."* (Exo 24:7-8)

b. **Besides the covenant which He made with them in Horeb:** For the most part, the people who had the blood of the covenant sprinkled upon them had died in the wilderness. The generation of unbelief had died, now it was an opportunity for the generation of faith. So, Moses will reconfirm the covenant with the new generation.

2. (2-4) *Israel saw wonders, but they did not see them.*

Now Moses called all Israel and said to them: "You have seen all that the LORD did before your eyes in the land of Egypt, to Pharaoh and to all his servants and to all his land; the great trials which your eyes have seen, the signs, and those great wonders. Yet the LORD has not given you a heart to perceive and eyes to see and ears to hear, to this very day.

a. **You have seen all that the LORD before your eyes:** Israel saw **great wonders** from the hand of God since coming from Egypt. They saw the plagues, they saw the death of the firstborn, they saw the Red Sea parted, they saw the Egyptian armies destroyed, they saw victories won by prayer, they ate the manna, they drank the miraculously provided water, and they saw miracle after miracle.

b. **Yet the LORD has not given you a heart to perceive:** The miracles in and of themselves could not accomplish anything in the heart of Israel. If God did not send His Spirit to change their hearts, then the greatest wonder imaginable would not make a difference.

i. Some people today think the greatest help to evangelism would be to see more miraculous events. After all, who could *not* believe in the face of such displays of spiritual power? But seeing **great wonders** accomplishes nothing apart from a supernatural work of God in someone's heart.

3. (5-9) *God's great works for Israel in the wilderness.*

And I have led you forty years in the wilderness. Your clothes have not worn out on you, and your sandals have not worn out on your feet. You have not eaten bread, nor have you drunk wine or similar drink, that you may know that I am the LORD your God. And when you came to this place, Sihon king of Heshbon and Og king of Bashan came out against us to battle,

and we conquered them. We took their land and gave it as an inheritance to the Reubenites, to the Gadites, and to half the tribe of Manasseh. Therefore keep the words of this covenant, and do them, that you may prosper in all that you do.

a. **And I have led you forty years in the wilderness:**

During their forty years **in the wilderness**, their **clothes** did not wear out, their **sandals** did not wear out, and though they had no **bread** to eat or **wine** to drink, their needs were provided for. Israel **conquered** over their enemies, and they **took their land**.

i. Plainly, these are remarkable miracles. Clothes and sandals simply do not last 40 years of hard marching in the wilderness apart from a miracle. The wilderness does not provide enough food and water to meet the needs of some two million people apart from a miracle. A nation of slaves for 400 years does not conquer standing nations and take their land apart from a miracle.

ii. Each of these *great wonders* (each proof in themselves of God's power and love for Israel) has a spiritual counterpart in our lives.

- In the wilderness of this world, God provides *clothes* for us (Rev 3:18).
- He gives us *shoes* (Eph 6:15).
- He gives us bread and wine to drink (1Co 11:23-26).
- In Him we *conquer* our enemies (Rom 8:37).
- We can take the *land* of our spiritual enemies (2Co 10:4-5).

b. **Therefore keep the words of this covenant:**

Seeing these great works of God, there is one logical

response. Knowing the greatness of God's love and power should make Israel more committed than ever to His covenant.

B. Renewing the covenant.

1. (10-15) The parties to the covenant.

All of you stand today before the LORD your God: your leaders and your tribes and your elders and your officers, all the men of Israel, your little ones and your wives; also the stranger who is in your camp, from the one who cuts your wood to the one who draws your water; that you may enter into covenant with the LORD your God, and into His oath, which the LORD your God makes with you today, that He may establish you today as a people for Himself, and that He may be God to you, just as He has spoken to you, and just as He has sworn to your fathers, to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. I make this covenant and this oath, not with you alone, but with him who stands here with us today before the LORD our God, as well as with him who is not here with us today

- a. **All of you stand today before the LORD your God:** This means that the covenant was made with the entire nation. This included the leaders, the men, the women, the children, and even the servants.
- b. **That He may establish you today as a people for Himself:** All of Israel was included in God's desire to **enter into covenant**, to be the **people for Himself**. He wasn't just looking for a few prominent and talented people, or for just one spiritual tribe like the Levites. God wanted the whole nation to be this **people for Himself**.
- c. **As well as with him who is not here with us today:** But the covenant extended beyond those who stood before the LORD and Moses on that day. It also

included **him who is not with us here today**. The descendants of this nation assembled before the LORD and Moses were also included in the covenant.

i. "The covenant demand is here extended to those who were yet to be born. Future generations were one with that early Israel who took the oath at Sinai." (Thompson)

2. (16-20) *The promise of judgment against the covenant-breaker.*

(for you know that we dwelt in the land of Egypt and that we came through the nations which you passed by, and you saw their abominations and their idols which were among them; wood and stone and silver and gold); so that there may not be among you man or woman or family or tribe, whose heart turns away today from the LORD our God, to go and serve the gods of these nations, and that there may not be among you a root bearing bitterness or wormwood; and so it may not happen, when he hears the words of this curse, that he blesses himself in his heart, saying, "I shall have peace, even though I follow the dictates of my heart"; as though the drunkard could be included with the sober. The LORD would not spare him; for then the anger of the LORD and His jealousy would burn against that man, and every curse that is written in this book would settle on him, and the LORD would blot out his name from under heaven.

a. **You saw their abominations and their idols which were among them:** Israel had seen the **abominations and... idols** of their pagan neighbors. God promised that anyone who **turns away from the LORD our God, to go and serve the gods of these**

nations, should never presume on a sense of peace in his heart.

b. **He blesses himself in his heart, saying “I have peace”:** Perhaps one who has turned from the LORD and to idols hears the curses against the covenant-breaker, yet thinks he has escaped any penalty. So, **he blesses himself in his heart, saying “I have peace.”** He may have an immediate sense of peace at the moment, but it is the peace of the blind, the peace of the ignorant, who cannot see the peril of coming judgment.

i. A rank sinner may feel confident in his own heart, having a marvelous sense of “peace.” But this peace is an illusion. It is the peace of the blind, of the unknowing. If a bomb is on a plane, most everyone on the plane is at peace the moment before the bomb explodes. But their peace is based on their ignorance. In the same way, a sinner may be completely untroubled in his heart. But this is only because he is blind.

ii. **As though the drunkard could be included with the sober:** The **drunkard** may be happy when he is drunk, but his happiness is based on a illusion. God warns against including the peace of the righteous with the peace the wicked might seem to have.

c. **The LORD would not spare him:** This truth is plain “*There is no peace,*” says the *LORD*, “*for the wicked.*” (Isa 48:22) The score may be settled on either side of eternity, but it will be settled. No one can forsake the *LORD* and escape the consequences.

3. (21-28) *The purpose for judgment against the covenant-breaker.*

And the LORD would separate him from all the tribes of Israel for adversity, according to all the curses of the covenant that are written in this Book of the Law, so that the coming generation of your children who rise up after you, and the foreigner who comes from a far land, would say, when they see the plagues of that land and the sicknesses which the LORD has laid on it: "The whole land *is* brimstone, salt, and burning; it is not sown, nor does it bear, nor does any grass grow there, like the overthrow of Sodom and Gomorrah, Admah, and Zeboim, which the LORD overthrew in His anger and His wrath." All nations would say, "Why has the LORD done so to this land? What does the heat of this great anger mean?" Then people would say: "Because they have forsaken the covenant of the LORD God of their fathers, which He made with them when He brought them out of the land of Egypt; for they went and served other gods and worshiped them, gods that they did not know and that He had not given to them. Then the anger of the LORD was aroused against this land, to bring on it every curse that is written in this book. And the LORD uprooted them from their land in anger, in wrath, and in great indignation, and cast them into another land, as *it is* this day."

a. **And the LORD would separate him from all the tribes of Israel for adversity:** There is an obvious reason to punish the covenant-breaker for his own sake. But God has a purpose beyond the reason of individual covenant.

b. **So that the coming generation of your children who rise up after you, and the foreigner who comes from a far land:** God's purpose in bringing judgment against a covenant-breaking Israel was also for the sake of **the coming generation of your children...**

and the foreigner. When they see the devastation that comes from breaking God's covenant, when they see what happens to the land **which the LORD overthrew in His anger and wrath**, they will be warned to obedience.

- i. We can also learn from the calamity that comes on the lives of others when they break God's covenant. We can learn that the price of disobedience is not worth it. We can learn that the commands of God are good, and protective in our lives.
 - c. **All nations would say:** God's purpose in bringing judgment against a covenant-breaking Israel was also for the sake of **all nations**. When they see what happens to a nation who forsakes the LORD, they will be warned to obedience.
4. (29) *God's revelation to Israel.*

The secret things belong to the LORD our God, but those things which are revealed belong to us and to our children forever, that we may do all the words of this law.

a. **The secret things belong to the LORD our God:** In the midst of this encouragement to obedience, Moses pauses to give a principle of how God speaks to us. First, God never declares *everything* to man:. There are secrets God has, and will always have. He has the right to have secrets, because He is God.

- i. God is bigger and smarter than us and always will be. We must simply accept this. "*For My thoughts are not your thoughts, nor are your ways My ways,*" says the *LORD*. "*For as the heavens are higher than the earth, so are My ways higher than your ways, and My thoughts than your thoughts.*" (*Isa 55:8-9*)

b. **Those things which are revealed:** Second, God does reveal *some* things to man. Since God is there, and *He is not silent*, we must do all we can to pay close attention to Him.

c. **Those things which are revealed belong to us:** Third, God's revelation is meant to say something to us. God did not speak just to blow our minds or to amuse us; there is a message which *belongs* to us. While we cannot perfectly understand God's revelation, it is perfectly understandable.

d. **To us and to our children:** Fourth, God's revelation is *trans-generational*. Yes, God had a specific message for Moses' generation, but the message goes beyond its original audience to speak to all generations which follow.

e. **To us and our children forever:** Fifth, God's revelation is *eternal*. His word not only lasts **forever**, it is **forever** relevant. God's word is more relevant than any new fad or interest which might sweep through the world or the church.

f. **That we may do all the words of this law:** Finally, God's revelation must *matter* to us. He has not spoken to us merely to satisfy our curiosity about spiritual things. He has spoken to us to affect the way we *live*. If we are only hearers of the word, and not doers also, then we have not really received His word.

Repentance and Forgiveness

Deu 30:1 "I have now given you a choice between a blessing and a curse. When all these things have happened to you, and you are living among the nations where the LORD your God has scattered you, you will remember the choice I gave you.

Deu 30:2 If you and your descendants will turn back to the LORD and with all your heart obey his commands that I am

giving you today,

Deu 30:3 then the LORD your God will have mercy on you. He will bring you back from the nations where he has scattered you, and he will make you prosperous again.

Deu 30:4 Even if you are scattered to the farthest corners of the earth, the LORD your God will gather you together and bring you back,

Deu 30:5 so that you may again take possession of the land where your ancestors once lived. And he will make you more prosperous and more numerous than your ancestors ever were.

Deu 30:6 The LORD your God will give you and your descendants obedient hearts, so that you will love him with all your heart, and you will continue to live in that land.

Deu 30:7 He will turn all these curses against your enemies, who hated you and oppressed you,

Deu 30:8 and you will again obey him and keep all his commands that I am giving you today.

Deu 30:9 The LORD will make you prosperous in all that you do; you will have many children and a lot of livestock, and your fields will produce abundant crops. He will be as glad to make you prosperous as he was to make your ancestors prosperous,

Deu 30:10 but you will have to obey him and keep all his laws that are written in this book of his teachings. You will have to turn to him with all your heart.

The Choice of Life and Death

Deu 30:11 "The command that I am giving you today is not too difficult or beyond your reach.

Deu 30:12 It is not up in the sky. You do not have to ask, 'Who will go up and bring it down for us, so that we can hear it and obey it?'

Deu 30:13 Nor is it on the other side of the ocean. You do not have to ask, 'Who will go across the ocean and bring it to us, so that we may hear it and obey it?'

Deu 30:14 No, it is here with you. You know it and can quote it, so now obey it.

Deu 30:15 "Today I am giving you a choice between good and evil, between life and death.

Deu 30:16 If you obey the commands of the LORD your God, which I give you today, if you love him, obey him, and keep all his laws, then you will prosper and become a nation of many people. The LORD your God will bless you in the land that you are about to occupy.

Deu 30:17 But if you disobey and refuse to listen, and are led away to worship other gods,

Deu 30:18 you will be destroyed—I warn you here and now. You will not live long in that land across the Jordan that you are about to occupy.

Deu 30:19 I am now giving you the choice between life and death, between God's blessing and God's curse, and I call heaven and earth to witness the choice you make. Choose life.

Deu 30:20 Love the LORD your God, obey him and be faithful to him, and then you and your descendants will live long in the land that he promised to give your ancestors, Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob."

Deuteronomy 30:1-20

Deuteronomy 30 - The Choice

A. Restoration for a repentant Israel.

1. (1) *When all these things come upon you.*

Now it shall come to pass, when all these things come upon you, the blessing and the curse which I have set

before you, and you call them to mind among all the nations where the LORD your God drives you,

a. **Now it shall come to pass, when all these things come upon you:** Under the inspiration of the LORD, Moses carefully explained the blessings and curses that would come upon an obedient or disobedient Israel. Under the same inspiration, Moses knew that **all these things** would come upon Israel.

i. From the height of blessing during the reigns of David and Solomon, to the depth of cursing at the fall of Jerusalem, Israel's history has been a legacy of either being blessed or cursed under the terms of the Old Covenant.

b. **And you call them to mind among all the nations where the LORD your God drives you:** God knew that Israel would be scattered and exiled, and here through Moses, God calls the *Diaspora* (Israel dispersed among the nations) to remember the promises of **the blessing and the curse**.

2. (2-5) *God's promise to restore Israel in the Promised Land.*

And you return to the LORD your God and obey His voice, according to all that I command you today, you and your children, with all your heart and with all your soul, that the LORD your God will bring you back from captivity, and have compassion on you, and gather you again from all the nations where the LORD your God has scattered you. If any of you are driven out to the farthest parts under heaven, from there the LORD your God will gather you, and from there He will bring you. Then the LORD your God will bring you to the land which your fathers possessed, and you shall possess it. He will prosper you and multiply you more than your fathers.

a. **Return to the LORD your God:** As Israel would return to the LORD, God would bless them and **bring you back from captivity, and have compassion on you.**

i. Of course, this was fulfilled in part by the return of the Babylonian exiles during the times of Ezra and Nehemiah. But the ultimate fulfillment of this would await the Twentieth Century, when God would regather Israel in the Promised Land. This modern regathering is a larger, broader, more sovereign, and more miraculous restoration than that recorded in Ezra and Nehemiah.

b. **From all the nations where the LORD your God has scattered you:** The modern restoration of Israel more accurately fulfills this promise than the return from the Babylonian exile. Today, Israel is populated from Jews from virtually every country in the world. The breadth of this promise is important because God repeats the idea in verse 4: **If any of you are driven out to the farthest parts under heaven, from there the LORD God will gather you.**

i. Adam Clarke, writing in 1811, recognized that this regathering had to be fulfilled in a future time: "As this promise refers to a return from captivity in which they had been scattered among all nations, consequently it is not the Babylonish captivity which is intended; and the repossession of their land must be different from that which was consequent on their return from Chaldea."

c. **Then the LORD your God will bring you to the land which your fathers possessed, and you shall possess it:** The restoration had to happen in the land of Israel. The modern restoration of Israel more accurately fulfills this promise than the return from the Babylonian

exile. In the return from the Babylonian exile, Israel was still a vassal state of the Persians. But in the modern restoration of Israel, **you shall possess it** is literally fulfilled.

i. At one time, in the early days of the Zionist movement, the British offered the country of Uganda to the Jews as a place to establish a Jewish state. If that would have happened, and if Jews from all over the world had flocked there to establish a Jewish state, it would *not* fulfill the promise of restoration stated here and in other Old Testament passages. The promise here is plain: **The land which your fathers possessed.**

d. **He will prosper you and multiply you more than your fathers:** This promise is fulfilled only in the modern restoration of Israel, not in the return from the Babylonian exile. In the days of the return from the Babylonian exile, the Jewish community was small, weak, and poor. But today, under the modern restoration of Israel, the state of Israel does indeed **prosper** and the promise to **multiply you more than your fathers** is fulfilled. Israel, as a nation, is larger, stronger, and richer than at any time in Biblical history.

3. (6) *The spiritual restoration of Israel.*

And the LORD your God will circumcise your heart and the heart of your descendants, to love the LORD your God with all your heart and with all your soul, that you may live.

a. **And the LORD your God will circumcise your heart... to love the LORD your God with all your heart:** As remarkable and as prophetically meaningful the modern restoration of Israel is, it is incomplete. The spiritual dimension of the restoration has not yet been accomplished.

i. Today Israel is a largely secular nation. There is respect for the Bible as a book of history and national identity, but there is not, and has not been, a true turning to the LORD God, particularly as a nation.

ii. We can say that in a sense, not even the religious or Orthodox Jews have completely turned to the LORD. Though they have had an important and precious part in God's plan for Israel in helping a spiritual consciousness for the Jewish people to survive through the centuries of the *Diaspora*, they have not truly turned to the LORD. We can say this because the character and nature of the LORD is perfectly expressed in His Messiah, Jesus. Jesus said, *He who believes in Me, believes not in Me but in Him who sent Me. And he who sees Me sees Him who sent Me.* (Joh 12:44-45) Since the Jewish people, except for a precious remnant, reject Jesus, they are rejecting the LORD God.

iii. But God's promise still stands. As the final aspect of the promise to restore Israel, God will restore them spiritually. He promises to **circumcise your heart**. This is an idea repeated in the promises of the New Covenant, in passages like Eze 36:26-27 : *I will give you a new heart and put a new spirit within you; I will take the heart of stone out of your flesh and give you a heart of flesh. I will put My Spirit within you and cause you to walk in My statutes, and you will keep My judgments and do them.* Indeed, Paul promised that *all Israel will be saved* (Rom 11:26). Jesus said that He would not return until Israel embraced Him as Messiah: *For I say to you, you shall see Me no more till you say, "Blessed is He who comes in the name of the LORD!"* (Mat 23:39)

iv. Some have thought that because the modern restoration of Israel has not yet demonstrated this spiritual dynamic that it has nothing to do with these prophesies. But the spiritual dynamic is properly listed in Deu 30:2-6 as the last of the blessings of restoration. Also, the picture of restoration in Ezekiel 37 - the vision of the dry bones - shows Israel restored, and strong, *before* the LORD breathed the breath of His Spirit on the restored Israel. We regard the modern restoration of Israel as a remarkable sign, and an extremely significant - but thus far only partial - fulfillment of these prophesies.

4. (7-10) Blessings upon repentant Israel.

Also the LORD your God will put all these curses on your enemies and on those who hate you, who persecuted you. And you will again obey the voice of the LORD and do all His commandments which I command you today. The LORD your God will make you abound in all the work of your hand, in the fruit of your body, in the increase of your livestock, and in the produce of your land for good. For the LORD will again rejoice over you for good as He rejoiced over your fathers, if you obey the voice of the LORD your God, to keep His commandments and His statutes which are written in this Book of the Law, and if you turn to the LORD your God with all your heart and with all your soul.

a. **Also the LORD your God will put all these curses on your enemies... The LORD your God will make you abound:** In part, these prophecies are fulfilled now in the modern restoration of Israel. But perhaps their ultimate fulfillment will happen in the millennium, when Israel has restored as a people truly turned to the LORD and His Messiah, Jesus.

B. Moses concludes his great sermon: *choose life!*

1. (11-14) Israel's capability to keep the covenant.

For this commandment which I command you today is not too mysterious for you, nor is it far off. It is not in heaven, that you should say, "Who will ascend into heaven for us and bring it to us, that we may hear it and do it?" Nor is it beyond the sea, that you should say, "Who will go over the sea for us and bring it to us, that we may hear it and do it?" But the word is very near you, in your mouth and in your heart, that you may do it.

- a. **For this commandment which I command you today:** The covenant which God made with Israel - the Old Covenant - was not **too mysterious for you, nor is it far off**. Israel could indeed keep this covenant. God was not expecting the impossible from Israel when He expected them to keep this covenant.
- b. **But the word is very near you, in your mouth and in your heart, that you may do it:** However, this is not intended to mean that the Mosaic Law could be perfectly kept, and that a person could be sufficiently obedient to the Mosaic Law to earn a righteous standing before God.
 - i. Remember that the *law* was only one aspect of the Old Covenant. There were also the aspects of *sacrifice* and *the choice*. God never expected Israel to perfectly obey the law and find righteousness through law-obedience. That is why He provided for the *sacrifice* - the punishment of a perfect, innocent victim in the place of the sinner. God did not expect an Israelite to trust in his obedience to the Law to save Him (though God wanted Israel to love His law). God expected an Israelite to trust in the atonement made by

sacrifice to make him righteous, and to understand that this sacrifice pointed towards a perfect sacrifice God would one day make through the Messiah. In this, a godly Israelite, in the Old Covenant, trusted in the work of Jesus the Messiah to save him even before the time of Jesus.

- c. **That you may do it:** Yet the Old Covenant, as a whole, including the aspects of law, sacrifice, and choice could be kept. It wasn't beyond Israel's capability to keep.

2. (15-18) *The choice.*

See, I have set before you today life and good, death and evil, in that I command you today to love the LORD your God, to walk in His ways, and to keep His commandments, His statutes, and His judgments, that you may live and multiply; and the LORD your God will bless you in the land which you go to possess. But if your heart turns away so that you do not hear, and are drawn away, and worship other gods and serve them, I announce to you today that you shall surely perish; you shall not prolong your days in the land which you cross over the Jordan to go in and possess.

- a. **See, I have set before you today life and good, death and evil:** Under the terms of the Old Covenant, Israel had a choice: **life or death, good or evil.** It was up to them. God was going to glorify Himself through Israel one way or another. How it would happen was really their *choice*.

- b. **The LORD your God will bless you in the land which you go to possess:** Under the terms of the Old Covenant, Israel, if obedient, would see blessing. If disobedient, then Israel would **surely perish.** It was up to Israel and based on their conduct.

i. It is essential for us to understand that we, in Jesus Christ, *do not* relate to God on the terms of the Old Covenant, but on the terms of a better covenant: The New Covenant. Under the New Covenant, my relationship with God is not based on what *I do* for God, but on what *Jesus has done* on my behalf. There is, of course, more to the New Covenant than this, but this is one crucial distinction between the two covenants.

ii. If this Old Covenant is inferior to the New Covenant, and if there was a high price to pay for rejecting the Old Covenant, should we not know there is an even greater penalty for rejecting an even greater covenant? (Heb 10:28-29)

3. (19-20) **Choose life.**

I call heaven and earth as witnesses today against you, that I have set before you life and death, blessing and cursing; therefore choose life, that both you and your descendants may live; that you may love the LORD your God, that you may obey His voice, and that you may cling to Him, for He is your life and the length of your days; and that you may dwell in the land which the LORD swore to your fathers, to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, to give them.

a. **I call heaven and earth as witness today against you:** In these most solemn words, Moses set the choice before Israel. They had to choose between **life and death, blessing and cursing.**

b. **Therefore choose life:** At the same time, though the choice belonged to Israel, God cared about *what* they chose. When Moses pled with Israel, crying out **choose life**, we know he reflected the heart of God toward Israel. How God glorified Himself through Israel was up to them, but it was obviously God's preference that He

glorify Himself through an obedient, blessed Israel. So He pled, **choose life!**

i. Man today, even outside the Old Covenant, is confronted with the choice. But the choice focuses first not on "Will I obey God or not?" but on "Will I trust in Jesus for my standing before God?" Jesus said, *He who is not with Me is against Me, and he who does not gather with Me scatters.* (Luk 11:23) Jesus is still asking the question, *who do you say that I am* (Mat 16:15), and our choice in answering that question determines our eternal destiny.

c. **That you may love the LORD your God:** To love God this way, to really trust Him, is explained well in Deu 30:20. To love and trust God means to **obey His voice**, for a child who really loves and trusts their father will obey him. It means to **cling to Him**, for if we really love and trust Him, we will be attached to Him. It means to regard Him as our **life and the length of your days**, because if we love and trust Him, He is not *part* of our life, He *is* our life.

Joshua to Succeed Moses

Deu 31:1 Moses continued speaking to the people of Israel,

Deu 31:2 and said, "I am now a hundred and twenty years old and am no longer able to be your leader. And besides this, the LORD has told me that I will not cross the Jordan.

Deu 31:3 The LORD your God himself will go before you and destroy the nations living there, so that you can occupy their land; and Joshua will be your leader, as the LORD has said.

Deu 31:4 The LORD will destroy those people, just as he defeated Sihon and Og, kings of the Amorites, and destroyed their country.

Deu 31:5 The LORD will give you victory over them, and you are to treat them exactly as I have told you.

Deu 31:6 Be determined and confident. Do not be afraid of them. Your God, the LORD himself, will be with you. He will not fail you or abandon you."

Deu 31:7 Then Moses called Joshua and said to him in the presence of all the people of Israel, "Be determined and confident; you are the one who will lead these people to occupy the land that the LORD promised to their ancestors.

Deu 31:8 The LORD himself will lead you and be with you. He will not fail you or abandon you, so do not lose courage or be afraid."

The Reading of the Law

Deu 31:9 So Moses wrote down God's Law and gave it to the levitical priests, who were in charge of the LORD's Covenant Box, and to the leaders of Israel.

Deu 31:10 He commanded them, "At the end of every seven years, when the year that debts are canceled comes around, read this aloud at the Festival of Shelters.

Deu 31:11 Read it to the people of Israel when they come to worship the LORD your God at the one place of worship.

Deu 31:12 Call together all the men, women, and children, and the foreigners who live in your towns, so that everyone may hear it and learn to honor the LORD your God and to obey his teachings faithfully.

Deu 31:13 In this way your descendants who have never heard the Law of the LORD your God will hear it. And so they will learn to obey him as long as they live in the land that you are about to occupy across the Jordan."

Joshua Commissioned to Lead Israel

Deu 31:14 Then the LORD said to Moses, "You do not have much longer to live. Call Joshua and bring him to the Tent,

so that I may give him his instructions." Moses and Joshua went to the Tent,

Deu 31:15 and the LORD appeared to them there in a pillar of cloud that stood by the door of the Tent.

Deu 31:16 The LORD said to Moses, "You will soon die, and after your death the people will become unfaithful to me and break the covenant that I made with them. They will abandon me and worship the pagan gods of the land they are about to enter.

Deu 31:17 When that happens, I will become angry with them; I will abandon them, and they will be destroyed. Many terrible disasters will come upon them, and then they will realize that these things are happening to them because I, their God, am no longer with them.

Deu 31:18 And I will refuse to help them then, because they have done evil and worshiped other gods.

Deu 31:19 "Now, write down this song. Teach it to the people of Israel, so that it will stand as evidence against them.

Deu 31:20 I will take them into this rich and fertile land, as I promised their ancestors. There they will have all the food they want, and they will live comfortably. But they will turn away and worship other gods. They will reject me and break my covenant,

Deu 31:21 and many terrible disasters will come on them. But this song will still be sung, and it will stand as evidence against them. Even now, before I take them into the land that I promised to give them, I know what they are thinking."

Deu 31:22 That same day Moses wrote down the song and taught it to the people of Israel.

Deu 31:23 Then the LORD spoke to Joshua son of Nun and told him, "Be confident and determined. You will lead the

people of Israel into the land that I promised them, and I will be with you."

Deu 31:24 Moses wrote God's Law in a book, taking care not to leave out anything.

Deu 31:25 When he finished, he said to the levitical priests, who were in charge of the LORD's Covenant Box,

Deu 31:26 "Take this book of God's Law and place it beside the Covenant Box of the LORD your God, so that it will remain there as a witness against his people.

Deu 31:27 I know how stubborn and rebellious they are. They have rebelled against the LORD during my lifetime, and they will rebel even more after I am dead.

Deu 31:28 Assemble all your tribal leaders and officials before me, so that I can tell them these things; I will call heaven and earth to be my witnesses against them.

Deu 31:29 I know that after my death the people will become wicked and reject what I have taught them. And in time to come they will meet with disaster, because they will have made the LORD angry by doing what he has forbidden."

The Song of Moses

Deu 31:30 Then Moses recited the entire song while all the people of Israel listened.

Deuteronomy 31:1-30

Deuteronomy 31 - Some Final Instructions from Moses

A. Moses charges the people, Joshua, and the priests.

1. (1-2) Moses at one hundred and twenty.

Then Moses went and spoke these words to all Israel. And he said to them: "I am one hundred and twenty years old today. I can no longer go out and come in.

Also the LORD has said to me, 'You shall not cross over this Jordan.'

a. **I am one hundred and twenty years old today:**

Moses, at 120 years, was not limited by his physical condition (in a short time he will climb to the top of a mountain). Instead, he could **no longer go out and come in** because he was limited by God's command - the decree that Moses would not enter the Promised Land (Num 20:7-12).

b. **You shall not cross over this Jordan:** These specific words of God to Moses are not recorded in the Numbers 20 account; this must be a further elaboration of the decree *you shall not bring this congregation into the land which I have given them* (Num 20:12).

i. There is a difference between *you shall not bring this congregation into the land* and **you shall not cross over this Jordan.** By the first statement, it is allowable that Moses could go into the Promised Land, but not as the leader of the nation, having passed the torch of leadership to Joshua. But God made it even more clear to Moses: **you shall not cross over this Jordan.**

ii. God's correction of Moses was hard; not only will he not lead Israel into the Promised Land, he will not even go there. That which he had dreamed of, and felt called to, as a child in the palaces of Egypt - to deliver God's people - will not be completed. Another will finish the job, and Moses' feet will never touch the soil of the land that God had promised to the covenant descendants of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. Why was it such a severe punishment? What did Moses do?

iii. Essentially, at Meribah (Num 20:7-12), when Israel complained and cried out for water, Moses

misrepresented God. He misrepresented God by lecturing the nation harshly and unnecessarily. Moses misrepresented God by acting as if God *needed* him to provide water for the people. And Moses both misrepresented and disobeyed God by angrily striking the rock twice, instead of just speaking to the rock as God had told him to.

iv. This may seem an excessively harsh punishment for Moses; after all, with only one slip-up, he now must die short of the Promised Land? But Moses was being judged by a stricter standard because of his leadership position with the nation, and because he had a uniquely close relationship with God. It is right for teachers and leaders to be judged by a stricter standard (Jas 3:1); though it is unrighteous to hold teachers and leaders to a perfect standard. It is true the people's conduct was worse than Moses' but it is irrelevant.

v. Worst of all, Moses defaced a beautiful picture of Jesus' redemptive work through the rock that provided water in the wilderness. The New Testament makes it clear this water-providing, life-giving rock was a picture of Jesus (1Co 10:4). Jesus, being struck once, provided life for all who would drink of Him (Joh 7:37). But it was unnecessary - and unrighteous - that Jesus would be struck again, much less again twice, because the Son of God needed only to suffer once (Heb 10:10-12). Jesus can now be come to with words of faith (Rom 10:8-10), as Moses should have only used words of faith to bring life-giving water to the nation of Israel. Moses "ruined" this picture of the work of Jesus God intended.

vi. So now, Moses must face his destiny. Not only *you shall not bring this congregation into the land* but

also, you shall not cross over this Jordan.

2. (3-6) The charge to the children of Israel.

The LORD your God Himself crosses over before you; He will destroy these nations from before you, and you shall dispossess them. Joshua himself crosses over before you, just as the LORD has said. And the LORD will do to them as He did to Sihon and Og, the kings of the Amorites and their land, when He destroyed them. The LORD will give them over to you, that you may do to them according to every commandment which I have commanded you. Be strong and of good courage, do not fear nor be afraid of them; for the LORD your God, He is the One who goes with you. He will not leave you nor forsake you.

a. The LORD your God Himself crosses over before you: Moses had led Israel for 40 years; he was the only leader most of these people had ever known. Yet the nation could be confident, and Moses could go his way in peace because He knew God was with Israel. Israel, Moses, or Joshua did not have to be afraid. Instead, they could **Be strong and of good courage**, because **the LORD your God, He is the One who goes with you.**

i. Moses was a great man; one of the greatest to ever walk this earth. But Moses was not irreplaceable. God being with them, Israel was in good hands, with or without Moses.

b. Be strong and of good courage: It was now time for the nation to take courage in the LORD and **not fear nor be dismayed**. Moses passes from the scene, but God has not abandoned Israel.

3. (7-8) The charge to Joshua.

Then Moses called Joshua and said to him in the sight of all Israel, "Be strong and of good courage, for you

must go with this people to the land which the LORD has sworn to their fathers to give them, and you shall cause them to inherit it. And the LORD, He is the one who goes before you. He will be with you, He will not leave you nor forsake you; do not fear nor be dismayed.”

a. **Then Moses called Joshua and said to him in the sight of all Israel:** Bringing the people into the Promised Land was God’s work. He was going to do it. But God almost always does His work through men and women who make themselves available to Him.

i. Sometimes people wrongly say, “It is all the LORD, it’s all the LORD.” True, God does *His* work, but He does it *through* people.

b. **Be strong and of good courage:** Since God was going to use Joshua, he must **be strong and of good courage**. But Moses knew Joshua and knew that he would. So he confidently said, **you shall cause them to inherit it.**

i. Men of encouragement like Moses are a blessing. Moses knew that Joshua might be wavering, so he encouraged him, and pushed him forward to be more than he perhaps thought he could be. God uses encouraging people to help us fulfill the destiny He has for us.

ii. Joshua was the man; but the work was the LORD’s: **He is the one who goes before you.**

4. (9-13) *The charge to the priests.*

So Moses wrote this law and delivered it to the priests, the sons of Levi, who bore the ark of the covenant of the LORD, and to all the elders of Israel. And Moses commanded them, saying: “At the end of every seven years, at the appointed time in the year

of release, at the Feast of Tabernacles, when all Israel comes to appear before the LORD your God in the place which He chooses, you shall read this law before all Israel in their hearing. Gather the people together, men and women and little ones, and the stranger who is within your gates, that they may hear and that they may learn to fear the LORD your God and carefully observe all the words of this law, and that their children, who have not known it, may hear and learn to fear the LORD your God as long as you live in the land which you cross the Jordan to possess.”

- a. **Moses wrote this law:** Just as the kings of Israel were to write their own copy of God’s law (Deu 17:18), so **Moses wrote this law.** He, as an uncrowned king over Israel, loved God’s word and wanted to pass it on to the generation behind him.
- b. **You shall read this law before all Israel in their hearing:** Part of the job of the Levites was to minister the word of God to the nation, as they were scattered throughout the nation. Every seven years they were to have a public reading and explanation of the law of God, as was modeled in Neh 8:1-8.
 - i. The first we know of a public reading of the law is in Jos 8:30. The next we hear of it is during the reign of Jehoshaphat (2Ch 17:7), more than 500 years later. Then, in the reign of Josiah there was another public reading of the law (2Ch 34:30), more than 250 years after Jehoshaphat. Of course, there might have been public readings of the law as commanded here which are not recorded; but the fact that some are recorded probably means they were unusual, not typical. With this kind of neglect of God’s word, no wonder Israel was so often in trouble!

c. And that their children... may hear and learn to fear the LORD: This seven-year national focus on God's word was especially important for the children among the people of Israel. Through His word, they could come to a personal relationship with the LORD.

B. Moses insures his legacy.

1. (14-15) The preface to Joshua's inauguration as leader of Israel.

Then the LORD said to Moses, "Behold, the days approach when you must die; call Joshua, and present yourselves in the tabernacle of meeting, that I may inaugurate him." So Moses and Joshua went and presented themselves in the tabernacle of meeting. **Now the LORD appeared at the tabernacle in a pillar of cloud, and the pillar of cloud stood above the door of the tabernacle.**

a. Present yourselves in the tabernacle of meeting: Through the wilderness journey, we find Moses and Joshua together before the LORD often. Exo 33:11 says, *his servant Joshua the son of Nun, a young man, did not depart from the tabernacle.* Joshua was qualified to serve because he was at home in the presence of the LORD.

b. Now the LORD appeared: This begins a solemn and important chapter in the history of God's people. This will be Moses' retirement ceremony and Joshua's inauguration ceremony.

2. (16-22) A song of Moses to warn Israel in a time of future apostasy.

And the LORD said to Moses: "Behold, you will rest with your fathers; and this people will rise and play the harlot with the gods of the foreigners of the land, where they go to be among them, and they will forsake Me and break My covenant which I have made

with them. Then My anger shall be aroused against them in that day, and I will forsake them, and I will hide My face from them, and they shall be devoured. And many evils and troubles shall befall them, so that they will say in that day, 'Have not these evils come upon us because our God is not among us?' And I will surely hide My face in that day because of all the evil which they have done, in that they have turned to other gods. Now therefore, write down this song for yourselves, and teach it to the children of Israel; put it in their mouths, that this song may be a witness for Me against the children of Israel. When I have brought them to the land flowing with milk and honey, of which I swore to their fathers, and they have eaten and filled themselves and grown fat, then they will turn to other gods and serve them; and they will provoke Me and break My covenant. Then it shall be, when many evils and troubles have come upon them, that this song will testify against them as a witness; for it will not be forgotten in the mouths of their descendants, for I know the inclination of their behavior today, even before I have brought them to the land of which I swore to give them."Therefore Moses wrote this song the same day, and taught it to the children of Israel.

- a. **This people will rise and play the harlot with the gods of the foreigners of the land:** Because of this future idolatry in Israel, God instructed Moses to compose sort of a national anthem for ancient Israel.
- b. **Therefore Moses wrote this song the same day, and taught it to the children of Israel:** Yet this was a strange national anthem, because the purpose of this anthem was to **testify against them as a witness**. God knew that words are more memorable when set to

music, so He told Moses to compose the sermon in a song found in the following chapter, Deuteronomy 32.

3. (23) *The inauguration of Joshua.*

Then He inaugurated Joshua the son of Nun, and said, “Be strong and of good courage; for you shall bring the children of Israel into the land of which I swore to them, and I will be with you.”

a. **Be strong and of good courage:** It is remarkable how often this exhortation is directed towards Joshua. He hears it seven different times (Deu 31:6-7; Deu 31:23; Jos 1:6-7; Jos 1:9; Jos 1:18).

i. This exposes Joshua's weakness; there was a *need* for such a command, because even a great leader like Joshua needed such encouragement.

ii. Most of us, God forgive us, are too big for God to use; we are too full of our own schemes and our own ways of doing things. Joshua needed to take strength and courage in the LORD and was small enough to be big in God.

iii. Wonderfully, the last time this phrase is used in connection with Joshua, *he* is encouraging *others* to *be strong and of good courage* (Jos 10:25). He could encourage others with the encouragement the LORD, through others, had given him.

b. **Be strong and of good courage:** This was a manly way to speak to Joshua. God (and Moses) would not pander to Joshua's weak and timid nature. He didn't hear, "Oh Joshua, you're so wonderful." "Oh Joshua, you're so strong." "Oh Joshua, you're so courageous." Instead, he heard, "Now is the time. Step up to the challenge. **Be strong and of good courage!**"

c. **You shall bring the children of Israel into the land:** Joshua, by nature weak and lacking courage,

needed to hear this from Moses. He needed to hear, "You are going to do it. It is going to happen."

4. (24-27) *Moses preserves the Law of God as a witness against Israel.*

So it was, when Moses had completed writing the words of this law in a book, when they were finished, that Moses commanded the Levites, who bore the ark of the covenant of the LORD, saying: "Take this Book of the Law, and put it beside the ark of the covenant of the LORD your God, that it may be there as a witness against you; for I know your rebellion and your stiff neck. If today, while I am yet alive with you, you have been rebellious against the LORD, then how much more after my death?"

a. **When Moses had completed writing the words of this law:** Moses finished the first five books of the Bible and gave this to Israel, and to all creation, as the inspired words of God.

i. Some raise objections at this point, wondering who wrote the last three chapters of Deuteronomy, because the text says that Moses finished here. No doubt, Joshua had the remainder of Moses' words and deeds recorded and added to the end of his magnificent work.

b. **Put it beside the ark of the covenant:** The Ten Commandments were placed inside the ark of the covenant (Heb 9:4). But the whole book of the law - Genesis through Deuteronomy - was placed **beside the ark of the covenant.**

c. **That it may be there as a witness against you:** Moses knew Israel would rebel. He knew this both from the promise of God (Deu 31:16-17), and from common sense (**If today, while I am yet alive with you, you**

have been rebellious against the LORD, how much more after my death?). Therefore, the law would stand as a **witness against** a rebellious Israel.

i. We love to find refuge in God's word in our times of stress and trouble, but we don't often consider that God's word, if we reject Jesus and rebel against God, is no friend to us. It is a **witness against** us, a witness that rises up to testify against us.

5. (28-30) *The elders and officers of Israel gather for the song of Moses.*

"Gather to me all the elders of your tribes, and your officers, that I may speak these words in their hearing and call heaven and earth to witness against them. For I know that after my death you will become utterly corrupt, and turn aside from the way which I have commanded you; and evil will befall you in the latter days, because you will do evil in the sight of the LORD, to provoke Him to anger through the work of your hands." Then Moses spoke in the hearing of all the assembly of Israel the words of this song until they were ended:

a. **Then Moses spoke in the hearing of all the assembly of Israel the words of this song until they were ended:** "In fact, the song of chapter 32 is strongly reminiscent in its structure and content of a well-known secular political form, namely, the formulation of a complaint against a rebel vassal by his overlord with the threat of punishment. It is not impossible that some, at least, in Israel would have understood such a pattern and Moses would certainly have met it in the pharaoh's court." (Thompson)

Deu 32:1 "Earth and sky, hear my words, listen closely to what I say.

Deu 32:2 My teaching will fall like drops of rain and form on the earth like dew. My words will fall like showers on young plants, like gentle rain on tender grass.

Deu 32:3 I will praise the name of the LORD, and his people will tell of his greatness.

Deu 32:4 "The LORD is your mighty defender, perfect and just in all his ways; Your God is faithful and true; he does what is right and fair.

Deu 32:5 But you are unfaithful, unworthy to be his people, a sinful and deceitful nation.

Deu 32:6 Is this the way you should treat the LORD, you foolish, senseless people? He is your father, your Creator, he made you into a nation.

Deu 32:7 "Think of the past, of the time long ago; ask your parents to tell you what happened, ask the old people to tell of the past.

Deu 32:8 The Most High assigned nations their lands; he determined where peoples should live. He assigned to each nation a heavenly being,

Deu 32:9 but Jacob's descendants he chose for himself.

Deu 32:10 "He found them wandering through the desert, a desolate, wind-swept wilderness. He protected them and cared for them, as he would protect himself.

Deu 32:11 Like an eagle teaching its young to fly, catching them safely on its spreading wings, the LORD kept Israel from falling.

Deu 32:12 The LORD alone led his people without the help of a foreign god.

Deu 32:13 "He let them rule the highlands, and they ate what grew in the fields. They found wild honey among the rocks; their olive trees flourished in stony ground.

Deu 32:14 Their cows and goats gave plenty of milk; they had the best sheep, goats, and cattle, the finest wheat, and the choicest wine.

Deu 32:15 "The LORD's people grew rich, but rebellious; they were fat and stuffed with food. They abandoned God their Creator and rejected their mighty savior.

Deu 32:16 Their idolatry made the LORD jealous; the evil they did made him angry.

Deu 32:17 They sacrificed to gods that are not real, new gods their ancestors had never known, gods that Israel had never obeyed.

Deu 32:18 They forgot their God, their mighty savior, the one who had given them life.

Deu 32:19 "When the LORD saw this, he was angry and rejected his sons and daughters.

Deu 32:20 'I will no longer help them,' he said; 'then I will see what happens to them, those stubborn, unfaithful people.

Deu 32:21 With their idols they have made me angry, jealous with their so-called gods, gods that are really not gods. So I will use a so-called nation to make them angry; I will make them jealous with a nation of fools.

Deu 32:22 My anger will flame up like fire and burn everything on earth. It will reach to the world below and consume the roots of the mountains.

Deu 32:23 " 'I will bring on them endless disasters and use all my arrows against them.

Deu 32:24 They will die from hunger and fever; they will die from terrible diseases. I will send wild animals to attack them, and poisonous snakes to bite them.

Deu 32:25 War will bring death in the streets; terrors will strike in the homes. Young men and young women will die; neither babies nor old people will be spared.

Deu 32:26 I would have destroyed them completely, so that no one would remember them.

Deu 32:27 But I could not let their enemies boast that they had defeated my people, when it was I myself who had

crushed them.'

Deu 32:28 "Israel is a nation without sense; they have no wisdom at all.

Deu 32:29 They fail to see why they were defeated; they cannot understand what happened.

Deu 32:30 Why were a thousand defeated by one, and ten thousand by only two? The LORD, their God, had abandoned them; their mighty God had given them up.

Deu 32:31 Their enemies know that their own gods are weak, not mighty like Israel's God.

Deu 32:32 Their enemies, corrupt as Sodom and Gomorrah, are like vines that bear bitter and poisonous grapes,

Deu 32:33 like wine made from the venom of snakes.

Deu 32:34 "The LORD remembers what their enemies have done; he waits for the right time to punish them.

Deu 32:35 The LORD will take revenge and punish them; the time will come when they will fall; the day of their doom is near.

Deu 32:36 The LORD will rescue his people when he sees that their strength is gone. He will have mercy on those who serve him, when he sees how helpless they are.

Deu 32:37 Then the LORD will ask his people, 'Where are those mighty gods you trusted?

Deu 32:38 You fed them the fat of your sacrifices and offered them wine to drink. Let them come and help you now; let them run to your rescue.

Deu 32:39 "I, and I alone, am God; no other god is real. I kill and I give life, I wound and I heal, and no one can oppose what I do.

Deu 32:40 As surely as I am the living God, I raise my hand and I vow

Deu 32:41 that I will sharpen my flashing sword and see that justice is done. I will take revenge on my enemies and punish those who hate me.

Deu 32:42 My arrows will drip with their blood, and my sword will kill all who oppose me. I will spare no one who fights against me; even the wounded and prisoners will die.'

Deu 32:43 "Nations, you must praise the LORD's people—he punishes all who kill them. He takes revenge on his enemies and forgives the sins of his people."

Deu 32:44 Moses and Joshua son of Nun recited this song, so that the people of Israel could hear it.

Deu 32:45 When Moses had finished giving God's teachings to the people,

Deu 32:46 he said, "Be sure to obey all these commands that I have given you today. Repeat them to your children, so that they may faithfully obey all of God's teachings.

Deu 32:47 These teachings are not empty words; they are your very life. Obey them and you will live long in that land across the Jordan that you are about to occupy."

Moses' Death Foretold

Deu 32:48 That same day the LORD said to Moses,

Deu 32:49 "Go to the Abarim Mountains in the land of Moab opposite the city of Jericho; climb Mount Nebo and look at the land of Canaan that I am about to give the people of Israel.

Deu 32:50 You will die on that mountain as your brother Aaron died on Mount Hor,

Deu 32:51 because both of you were unfaithful to me in the presence of the people of Israel. When you were at the waters of Meribah, near the town of Kadesh in the wilderness of Zin, you dishonored me in the presence of the people.

Deu 32:52 You will look at the land from a distance, but you will not enter the land that I am giving the people of Israel."

Deuteronomy 32:1-52

Deuteronomy 32 - The Song of Moses

A. The song of Moses.

1. (1-4) Introduction.

**Give ear, O heavens, and I will speak;
And hear, O earth, the words of my mouth.
Let my teaching drop as the rain,
My speech distill as the dew,
As raindrops on the tender herb,
And as showers on the grass.
For I proclaim the name of the LORD:
Ascribe greatness to our God.
He is the Rock, His work is perfect;
For all His ways are justice,
A God of truth and without injustice;
Righteous and upright is He.**

a. **Give ear, O heavens... and hear, O earth:** Moses began by asking for attention, not only from Israel, but from all of creation.

b. **I proclaim the name of the LORD: Ascribe greatness to our God:** He then gave praise to God, both for who God is (**He is the Rock... Righteous and upright is He**) and for what God does (**His work is perfect; for all His ways are justice**).

2. (5-6) The accusation: The child has forsaken its father.

**They have corrupted themselves;
They are not His children,
Because of their blemish:
A perverse and crooked generation.**

**Do you thus deal with the LORD,
O foolish and unwise people?
Is He not your Father, who bought you?
Has He not made you and established you?**

- a. **They have corrupted themselves:** Moses spoke as a witness against a rebellious Israel.
- b. **Is He not your Father, who bought you? Has He not made you and established you:** Their sin is even more **foolish and unwise** in light of what God has done for them. It is **foolish and unwise** to rebel against the God who has done so much for them.

3. (7-14) Moses recounts God's past faithfulness to Israel.

**Remember the days of old,
Consider the years of many generations.
Ask your father, and he will show you;
Your elders, and they will tell you:
When the Most High divided their inheritance to the
nations,
When He separated the sons of Adam,
He set the boundaries of the peoples
According to the number of the children of Israel.
For the LORD's portion is His people;
Jacob is the place of His inheritance.
He found him in a desert land
And in the wasteland, a howling wilderness;
He encircled him, He instructed him,
He kept him as the apple of His eye.
As an eagle stirs up its nest,
Hovers over its young,
Spreading out its wings, taking them up,
Carrying them on its wings,
So the LORD alone led him,
And there was no foreign god with him.
He made him ride in the heights of the earth,**

**That he might eat the produce of the fields;
He made him draw honey from the rock,
And oil from the flinty rock;
Curds from the cattle, and milk of the flock,
With fat of lambs;
And rams of the breed of Bashan, and goats,
With the choicest wheat;
And you drank wine, the blood of the grapes.**

a. **Remember the days of old:** Considering that this song was meant to be a *witness against* a rebellious Israel, Moses reminded Israel of all God's goodness to them. This was to both bring a greater conviction of sin, and to remind them of God's love and grace they could return to.

4. (15-18) *Israel responded to God's kindness with apostasy.*

**But Jeshurun grew fat and kicked;
You grew fat, you grew thick,
You are obese!
Then he forsook God *who* made him,
And scornfully esteemed the Rock of his salvation.
They provoked Him to jealousy with foreign *gods*;
With abominations they provoked Him to anger.
They sacrificed to demons, not to God,
To gods they did not know,
To new *gods*, new arrivals
That your fathers did not fear.
Of the Rock *who* begot you, you are unmindful,
And have forgotten the God who fathered you.**

a. **Jeshurun:** This is a title for Israel, which literally means *the upright one* (Isa 44:2).

b. **They sacrificed to demons:** In forsaking God, Israel turned to the pagan idols of the nations around them and actually worshipped demons. There was a dark

spiritual reality behind the idols of the nations, and Israel embraced that dark spiritual reality.

5. (19-27) *God's reaction: Withdrawal from and punishment of Israel.*

**And when the LORD saw it, He spurned them,
Because of the provocation of His sons and His
daughters.**

**And He said: I will hide My face from them,
I will see what their end *will be*,
For they *are* a perverse generation,
Children in whom *is* no faith.**

**They have provoked Me to jealousy by *what* is not
God;**

**They have moved Me to anger by their foolish idols.
But I will provoke them to jealousy by *those who are*
not a nation;**

I will move them to anger by a foolish nation.

**For a fire is kindled by my anger,
And shall burn to the lowest hell;
It shall consume the earth with her increase,
And set on fire the foundations of the mountains.**

I will heap disasters on them;

I will spend My arrows on them.

***They shall be wasted with hunger,*
Devoured by pestilence and bitter destruction;
I will also send against them the teeth of beasts,
With the poison of serpents of the dust.**

The sword shall destroy outside;

There shall be terror within

For the young man and virgin,

The nursing child with the man of gray hairs.

I would have said, "I will dash them in pieces,

**I will make the memory of them to cease from among
men,"**

Had I not feared the wrath of the enemy,

**Lest their adversaries should misunderstand,
Lest they should say, "Our hand *is* high;
And it is not the LORD who has done all this."**

a. **I will hide My face from them:** When God's people forsake Him, He withdraws the intimacy of His presence. At first, this is sometimes seen as a relief, because the conviction of sin is not so great. But then the darkness and desperation set in.

b. **I will heap disasters upon them:** When the hiding of His face does not draw God's people into repentance, God then sends His hand of correction, and allows calamity to bring the attention of His people back upon Him.

6. (28-43) *The LORD states His case and makes a plea unto Israel.*

**For they *are* a nation void of counsel,
Nor *is there any* understanding in them.
Oh, that they were wise, *that they understood this,*
That they would consider their latter end!
How could one chase a thousand,
And two put ten thousand to flight,
Unless their Rock had sold them,
And the LORD had surrendered them?
For their rock *is* not like our Rock,
Even our enemies themselves *being* judges.
For their vine *is* of the vine of Sodom
And of the fields of Gomorrah;
Their grapes *are* grapes of gall,
Their clusters *are* bitter.
Their wine *is* the poison of serpents,
And the cruel venom of cobras.
Is this not laid up in store with Me,
Sealed up among My treasures?
*Vengeance is Mine, and recompense;***

**Their foot shall slip in due time;
For the day of their calamity *is* at hand,
And the things to come hasten upon them.'**

**For the LORD will judge His people
And have compassion on His servants,
When He sees that *their* power is gone,
And *there is* no one *remaining*, bond or free.
He will say: 'Where are their gods,
The rock in which they sought refuge?
Who ate the fat of their sacrifices,
And drank the wine of their drink offering?
Let them rise and help you,
And be your refuge.**

**Now see that I, even I, *am* He,
And *there is* no God besides Me;
I kill and I make alive; I wound and I heal;
Nor *is there any* who can deliver from My hand.
For I raise My hand to heaven,
And say, "As I live forever,
If I whet My glittering sword,
And My hand takes hold on judgment,
I will render vengeance to My enemies,
And repay those who hate Me.
I will make My arrows drunk with blood,
And My sword shall devour flesh,
With the blood of the slain and the captives,
From the heads of the leaders of the enemy."**

**Rejoice, O Gentiles, *with* His people;
For He will avenge the blood of His servants,
And render vengeance to His adversaries;
He will provide atonement for His land *and* His people.**

- a. **That they would consider their latter end:** This can be a remarkably effective preventative to

backsliding. When we are in a backslidden state, we should consider where it will lead us.

b. **And have compassion on His servants:** When we are in a backslidden state, we should also see the compassion of God we *could* receive.

c. **There is no God besides Me:** When we are in a backslidden state, we should see the greatness of God. The backslidden man needs to know more of God's character and His nature.

7. (44-47) Moses encourages Israel.

So Moses came with Joshua the son of Nun and spoke all the words of this song in the hearing of the people. Moses finished speaking all these words to all Israel, and He said to them: "Set your hearts on all the words which I testify among you today, which you shall command your children to be careful to observe; all the words of this law. For it is not a futile thing for you, because it is your life, and by this word you shall prolong your days in the land which you cross over the Jordan to possess."

a. **It is not a futile thing:** One of Satan's great lies to us is that it is **a futile thing** to serve God and obey His word. It often seems that those who are against God prosper more than those who are for Him. Yet, we need to see and understand - from an eternal perspective - that **it is not a futile thing** to love and obey God.

8. (48-52) God's final command to Moses.

Then the LORD spoke to Moses that very same day, saying: "Go up this mountain of the Abarim, Mount Nebo, which is in the land of Moab, across from Jericho; view the land of Canaan, which I give to the children of Israel as a possession; and die on the mountain which you ascend, and be gathered to your

people, just as Aaron your brother died on Mount Hor and was gathered to his people; because you trespassed against Me among the children of Israel at the waters of Meribah Kadesh, in the Wilderness of Zin, because you did not hallow Me in the midst of the children of Israel. Yet you shall see the land before you, though you shall not go there, into the land which I am giving to the children of Israel."

- a. **Go up this mountain... and die on the mountain:** Moses, as the last act of his 120 years, will climb Mount Nebo, and die at the summit of the mountain.
- b. **You shall see the land before you, though you shall not go there:** Though Moses will not be allowed to cross the Jordan and enter the Promised Land, he can **view the land of Canaan.**

Moses' Final Blessing on Israel

Deu 33:1 These are the blessings that Moses, the man of God, pronounced on the people of Israel before he died.

Deu 33:2 The LORD came from Mount Sinai; he rose like the sun over Edom and shone on his people from Mount Paran. Ten thousand angels were with him, a flaming fire at his right hand.

Deu 33:3 The LORD loves his people and protects those who belong to him. So we bow at his feet and obey his commands.

Deu 33:4 We obey the Law that Moses gave us, our nation's most treasured possession.

Deu 33:5 The LORD became king of his people Israel when their tribes and leaders were gathered together.

Deu 33:6 Moses said about the tribe of Reuben: "May Reuben never die out, Although their people are few."

Deu 33:7 About the tribe of Judah he said: " LORD, listen to their cry for help; Unite them again with the other tribes.

Fight for them, LORD, And help them against their enemies."

Deu 33:8 About the tribe of Levi he said: "You, LORD, reveal your will by the Urim and Thummim Through your faithful servants, the Levites; You put them to the test at Massah And proved them true at the waters of Meribah.

Deu 33:9 They showed greater loyalty to you Than to parents, brothers, or children. They obeyed your commands And were faithful to your covenant.

Deu 33:10 They will teach your people to obey your Law; They will offer sacrifices on your altar.

Deu 33:11 LORD, help their tribe to grow strong; Be pleased with what they do. Crush all their enemies; Let them never rise again."

Deu 33:12 About the tribe of Benjamin he said: "This is the tribe the LORD loves and protects; He guards them all the day long, And he dwells in their midst."

Deu 33:13 About the tribe of Joseph he said: "May the LORD bless their land with rain And with water from under the earth.

Deu 33:14 May their land be blessed with sun-ripened fruit, Rich with the best fruits of each season.

Deu 33:15 May their ancient hills be covered with choice fruit.

Deu 33:16 May their land be filled with all that is good, Blessed by the goodness of the LORD, Who spoke from the burning bush. May these blessings come to the tribe of Joseph, Because he was the leader among his brothers.

Deu 33:17 Joseph has the strength of a bull, The horns of a wild ox. His horns are Manasseh's thousands And Ephraim's ten thousands. With them he gores the nations And pushes them to the ends of the earth."

Deu 33:18 About the tribes of Zebulun and Issachar he said: "May Zebulun be prosperous in their trade on the sea,

And may Issachar's wealth increase at home.

Deu 33:19 They invite foreigners to their mountain And offer the right sacrifices there. They get their wealth from the sea And from the sand along the shore."

Deu 33:20 About the tribe of Gad he said: "Praise God, who made their territory large. Gad waits like a lion To tear off an arm or a scalp.

Deu 33:21 They took the best of the land for themselves; A leader's share was assigned to them. They obeyed the LORD's commands and laws When the leaders of Israel were gathered together."

Deu 33:22 About the tribe of Dan he said: "Dan is a young lion; He leaps out from Bashan."

Deu 33:23 About the tribe of Naphtali he said: "Naphtali is richly blessed by the LORD's good favor; Their land reaches to the south from Lake Galilee."

Deu 33:24 About the tribe of Asher he said: "Asher is blessed more than the other tribes. May he be the favorite of his brothers, And may his land be rich with olive trees.

Deu 33:25 May his towns be protected with iron gates, And may he always live secure."

Deu 33:26 People of Israel, no god is like your God, riding in splendor across the sky, riding through the clouds to come to your aid.

Deu 33:27 God has always been your defense; his eternal arms are your support. He drove out your enemies as you advanced, and told you to destroy them all.

Deu 33:28 So Jacob's descendants live in peace, secure in a land full of grain and wine, where dew from the sky waters the ground.

Deu 33:29 Israel, how happy you are! There is no one like you, a nation saved by the LORD. The LORD himself is your shield and your sword, to defend you and give you victory.

Your enemies will come begging for mercy, and you will trample them down.

Deuteronomy 33:1-29

Deuteronomy 33 - Moses Blesses the Tribes

A. Introduction to the blessing of the tribes.

1. (1) Now this is the blessing.

Now this is the blessing with which Moses the man of God blessed the children of Israel before his death.

a. **Moses the man of God:** As he looked at Israel with a shepherd's heart, he could not leave them without blessing them. It must be this way. Moses could not leave this earth without a final blessing of the people he has loved and served in the LORD for these 40 years.

b. This chapter is similar in its effect to the blessing of Israel (Jacob) upon his twelve sons as recorded in Genesis 49. Since Moses was the one who recorded the blessing of Israel in Genesis 49, it is not a stretch to think he consciously modeled his blessing on Jacob's previous one.

2. (2-5) The context is set: The glory of God's revelation to Israel.

And he said:

**"The LORD came from Sinai,
And dawning on them from Seir;
He shone forth from Mount Paran,
And He came with ten thousands of saints;
From His right hand Came a fiery law for them.
Yes, He loves the people;
All His saints are in Your hand;
They sit down at Your feet;
Everyone receives Your words.**

**Moses commanded a law for us,
A heritage of the congregation of Jacob.
And He was King in Jeshurun,
When the leaders of the people were gathered,
All the tribes of Israel together."**

a. **The LORD came from Sinai:** In the midst of images of God's glory in revealing Himself and His word to Israel (**He shone... with ten thousands of saints... a fiery law... He was King**). This adds a sense of drama and grandeur to Moses' prophetic words to each tribe.

B. The blessing of the individual tribes.

1. (6) **Reuben: Nor let his men be few.**

**Let Reuben live, and not die,
Nor let his men be few.**

a. **Let Reuben live:** This is a general blessing for the tribe of Reuben. Moses prayed, "**Nor let his men be few**," asking that the tribe of Reuben be blessed with growth.

b. **Live and not die:** This tepid blessing is in line with Jacob's prophecy concerning the tribe of Reuben (*you shall not excel, Gen 49:4*). The tribe of Reuben never did excel; as far as we know, there never came a prophet, a judge, or a king from the tribe of Reuben.

2. (7) **Judah: May You be a help.**

And this he said of Judah:

**"Hear, LORD, the voice of Judah,
And bring him to his people;
Let his hands be sufficient for him,
And may You be a help against his enemies."**

a. **Hear, LORD, the voice of Judah:** Since the name **Judah** means *praise*, Moses prayed that the LORD would hear the *voice of praise*.

b. **Let his hands be sufficient:** Essentially, Moses prayed for the blessing and sustaining of the tribe of Judah, no doubt until it could fulfill its prophetic destiny to bring forth the Messiah.

i. Moses knew this destiny for the tribe of Judah from Jacob's prophecy in Gen 49:10 : *The scepter shall not depart from Judah.*

3. (8-11) Levi: *They shall teach... Israel Your law.*

And of Levi he said:

"Let Your Thummim and Your Urim be with Your holy one,

Whom You tested at Massah,

And with whom You contended at the waters of Meribah,

Who says of his father and mother, 'I have not seen them';

Nor did he acknowledge his brothers,

Or know his own children;

For they have observed Your word

And kept Your covenant.

They shall teach Jacob Your judgments,

And Israel Your law.

They shall put incense before You,

And a whole burnt sacrifice on Your altar.

Bless his substance, LORD,

And accept the work of his hands;

Strike the loins of those who rise against him,

And of those who hate him, that they rise not again."

a. **They have observed Your word and kept Your covenant:** Because of this, Levi had a blessed place among the tribes of Israel. Moses prayed that the **substance** of Levi would be blessed and that their enemies would be defeated.

b. **They shall teach Jacob Your judgments, and Israel Your law:** Especially, Levi had the blessed place of teaching Israel the word of God. They would accomplish this as they were scattered in Israel, as Jacob had prophesied (Gen 49:7).

i. The prophecy *I will divide them in Jacob and scatter them in Israel* (in Gen 49:7) was given to both the tribes of Simeon and Levi. For the tribe of Levi, it was a blessing, as they were scattered throughout the nation to minister to the people and to bring God's word to the whole nation. For the tribe of Simeon, the scattering was a significant curse; they are not even mentioned among the tribes being blessed here.

4. (12) **Benjamin: The beloved of the LORD.**

Of Benjamin he said:

**"The beloved of the LORD shall dwell in safety by Him,
Who shelters him all the day long;
And he shall dwell between His shoulders."**

a. **The beloved of the LORD:** The place of special love and blessing Benjamin had would be prophetically fulfilled in a Benjaminite city becoming the center of the nation - Jerusalem.

b. **Shall dwell in safety by Him:** Thus, though the tribe of Benjamin was indeed fierce and warlike (Jacob's prophecy described Benjamin as a *ravenous wolf*, Gen 49:27), the tribe was greatly **beloved of the LORD.**

5. (13-17) **Joseph: Let the blessing come.**

And of Joseph he said:

**"Blessed of the LORD is his land,
With the precious things of heaven, with the dew,**

**And the deep lying beneath,
With the precious fruits of the sun,
With the precious produce of the months,
With the best things of the ancient mountains,
With the precious things of the everlasting hills,
With the precious things of the earth and its fullness,
And the favor of Him who dwelt in the bush.
Let *the blessing* come 'on the head of Joseph,
And on the crown of the head of him *who was*
separate from his brothers.'
His glory *is like* a firstborn bull,
And his horns *like* the horns of the wild ox;
Together with them He shall push the peoples
To the ends of the earth;
They *are* the ten thousands of Ephraim,
And they *are* the thousands of Manasseh."**

a. **Blessed of the LORD is his land:** The two tribes of Joseph - **Ephraim** and **Manasseh** - were indeed blessed numerically in Israel. The descendants of this one son among twelve sons of Jacob were far more numerous than all the other tribes.

b. **Ten thousands of Ephraim... thousands of Manasseh:** This fulfilled Jacob's prophecy in Gen 49:22 (*Joseph is a fruitful bough, a fruitful bough by a well; his branches run over the wall*).

6. (18-19) *Zebulun and Issachar: They shall partake of the abundance of the seas.*

And of Zebulun he said:

**"Rejoice, Zebulun, in your going out,
And Issachar in your tents!
They shall call the peoples to the mountain;
There they shall offer sacrifices of righteousness;
For they shall partake of the abundance of the seas
And of treasures hidden in the sand."**

a. **They shall partake of the abundance of the seas:**

Both the tribes of Zebulun and Issachar were in the Galilee region and were blessed to take advantage of the Sea of Galilee.

b. **Treasures hidden in the sand:** This is consistent with what Jacob said of Zebulun in Gen 49:13 (*Zebulun shall dwell by the haven of the sea*).

7. (20-21) **Gad: He dwells as a lion.**

And of Gad he said:

**"Blessed is he who enlarges Gad;
He dwells as a lion,
And tears the arm and the crown of his head.
He provided the first *part* for himself,
Because a lawgiver's portion was reserved there.
He came *with* the heads of the people;
He administered the justice of the LORD,
And His judgments with Israel."**

a. **He dwells as a lion:** The lion-like character of the tribe of Gad was shown by the fact that Gad furnished many fine troops for David (1Ch 12:14). This is in fulfillment of Jacob's words in Gen 49:19 : *he shall triumph at last.*

8. (22) **Dan: A lion's whelp.**

And of Dan he said:

**"Dan is a lion's whelp;
He shall leap from Bashan."**

a. **He shall leap from Bashan:** This may not be a complimentary phrase. History records that Dan was a troublesome tribe. They were the tribe to introduce idolatry into Israel (Jdg 18:30); Jeroboam set up one of his idolatrous golden calves in Dan (1Ki 12:26-30), and later Dan became a center of idol worship in Israel

(Amo 8:14). Indeed, Jacob said of Dan in Gen 49:17, *Dan shall be a serpent by the way.*

b. **From Bashan:** The tribe of Dan originally was allotted land in the southern part of Israel but migrated to the north hundreds of years after this (Judges 18). Moses' reference to **Bashan** (a region in northern Israel) prophetically anticipated this migration.

9. (23) Naphtali: *Full of the blessing of the LORD.*

And of Naphtali he said:

**"O Naphtali, satisfied with favor,
And full of the blessing of the LORD,
Possess the west and the south."**

a. **O Naphtali, satisfied with favor:** The tribe of Naphtali was indeed **satisfied with favor**. Naphtali's land was in a key portion near the Sea of Galilee, the region where Jesus did much of His teaching and ministry. No wonder Moses says this tribe is **full of the blessing of the LORD**, and that Jacob said of Naphtali in Gen 49:21, *he gives goodly words.*

10. (24-25) Asher: *Most blessed of sons.*

And of Asher he said:

**"Asher is most blessed of sons;
Let him be favored by his brothers,
And let him dip his foot in oil.
Your sandals shall be iron and bronze;
As your days, so shall your strength be."**

a. **Asher is most blessed of sons:** The abundance of the tribe of Asher was also expressed by Jacob in Gen 49:20 (*he shall yield royal dainties*).

11. (26-29) Conclusion: *Happy are you, O Israel!*

**"There is no one like the God of Jeshurun,
Who rides the heavens to help you,
And in His excellency on the clouds.
The eternal God is your refuge,
And underneath are the everlasting arms;
He will thrust out the enemy from before you,
And will say, 'Destroy!'
Then Israel shall dwell in safety,
The fountain of Jacob alone,
In a land of grain and new wine;
His heavens shall also drop dew.
Happy are you, O Israel!
Who is like you, a people saved by the LORD,
The shield of your help
And the sword of your majesty!
Your enemies shall submit to you,
And you shall tread down their high places."**

a. **The eternal God is your refuge:** What blessing God bestowed on Israel! As Paul said in Rom 3:2 : *To them were committed the oracles of God.* The true greatness of Israel is the same as the greatness of the Christian: not in and of themselves, but in their God: T

here is no one like the God of Jeshurun.

b. **Who rides the heavens to help you:** God is great and uses His greatness on behalf of His people, upholding them with **the everlasting arms.** When we are **a people saved by the LORD**, it means that God is for us and heaven is on our side! *If God is for us, who can be against us?* (Rom 8:31) He is **the shield of your help.**

The Death of Moses

Deu 34:1 Moses went up from the plains of Moab to Mount Nebo, to the top of Mount Pisgah east of Jericho, and there the LORD showed him the whole land: the territory of Gilead as far north as the town of Dan;

Deu 34:2 the entire territory of Naphtali; the territories of Ephraim and Manasseh; the territory of Judah as far west as the Mediterranean Sea;

Deu 34:3 the southern part of Judah; and the plain that reaches from Zoar to Jericho, the city of palm trees.

Deu 34:4 Then the LORD said to Moses, "This is the land that I promised Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob I would give to their descendants. I have let you see it, but I will not let you go there."

Deu 34:5 So Moses, the LORD's servant, died there in the land of Moab, as the LORD had said he would.

Deu 34:6 The LORD buried him in a valley in Moab, opposite the town of Bethpeor, but to this day no one knows the exact place of his burial.

Deu 34:7 Moses was a hundred and twenty years old when he died; he was as strong as ever, and his eyesight was still good.

Deu 34:8 The people of Israel mourned for him for thirty days in the plains of Moab.

Deu 34:9 Joshua son of Nun was filled with wisdom, because Moses had appointed him to be his successor. The people of Israel obeyed Joshua and kept the commands that the LORD had given them through Moses.

Deu 34:10 There has never been a prophet in Israel like Moses; the LORD spoke with him face-to-face.

Deu 34:11 No other prophet has ever done miracles and wonders like those that the LORD sent Moses to perform against the king of Egypt, his officials, and the entire country.

Deu 34:12 No other prophet has been able to do the great and terrifying things that Moses did in the sight of all Israel.

Deuteronomy 34:1-12

Deuteronomy 34 - The Death of Moses

A. Moses on Mount Nebo.

1. (1-3) *The vision of the Promised Land.*

Then Moses went up from the plains of Moab to Mount Nebo, to the top of Pisgah, which is across from Jericho. And the LORD showed him all the land of Gilead as far as Dan, all Naphtali and the land of Ephraim and Manasseh, all the land of Judah as far as the Western Sea, the South, and the plain of the Valley of Jericho, the city of palm trees, as far as Zoar.

a. **Then Moses went up from the plains of Moab to Mount Nebo:** As Israel camped on the **plains of Moab**, Moses climbed the heights of **Mount Nebo** - from which he could see the Promised Land, **as far as the Western Sea.**

b. **And the LORD showed him all the land:** This was God's sweet grace to Moses. Though he could not set foot in the Promised Land, God allowed him to see it. Standing on the peak of **Nebo** on the collection of Mountains called **Pisgah**, Moses stood on what is the modern nation of Jordan, looking towards the Promised Land.

2. (4) *God's last words to Moses: This is the land...*

Then the LORD said to him, "This is the land of which I swore to give Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, saying, 'I will give it to your descendants.' I have caused you to see it with your eyes, but you shall not cross over there."

a. **This is the land of which I swore to give:** These words, being in the present tense, were spoken to Moses at the summit of Mount Nebo as he looked westward and saw the Promised Land.

i. The list of places here follows a large counter-clockwise circle from the north to the south. In this sweeping panorama, Moses saw the scope of the entire Promised Land.

ii. "The invitation to Moses to view the land was not merely a kindly provision of God to allow His servant to view Israel's inheritance. It may have had some legal significance. There is some evidence that this was part of a legal process. A man 'viewed' what he was to possess." (Thompson)

b. **I will give it to your descendants:** God **swore** to give it to the descendants of **Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob**, and now the promise was going to be fulfilled. Moses was allowed to take the descendants of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob up to the threshold of the Promised Land, but no further.

c. **I have caused you to see it with your eyes, but you shall not cross over there:** What a bittersweet moment! Moses saw this, and his heart was thrilled at being able to see the Promised Land as never before. Yet, there was no doubt a sadness in His heart, knowing that it was his own sin - his own misrepresentation of God (Num 20:7-12) - which led to his not being able to set foot in the Promised Land himself. Here he stood so close, yet so far away.

i. "What drama! What pathos! What inward pain! What sense of accomplishment mixed with disappointment must have been in Moses' mind as he looked over the land the Lord had promised to Israel!" (Kalland)

ii. Looking out over the vast panorama, on what must have been a crystal-clear day, Moses saw the end result of his life's work - leading the children of Israel into the Promised Land - and heard God say, as

clearly as he had ever heard God speak, "**this is the land.**"

*3. (5-8) The death and burial of Moses, **the servant of the LORD.***

So Moses the servant of the LORD died there in the land of Moab, according to the word of the LORD. And He buried him in a valley in the land of Moab, opposite Beth Peor; but no one knows his grave to this day. Moses was one hundred and twenty years old when he died. His eyes were not dim nor his natural vigor diminished. And the children of Israel wept for Moses in the plains of Moab thirty days. So the days of weeping and mourning for Moses ended.

a. **So Moses the servant of the LORD died there in the land of Moab:** Moses' epitaph – what we might call the line on his tombstone, though he actually had none – was simple.

- It was not "Moses, Prince of Egypt."
- It was not "Moses, Murderer of an Egyptian."
- It was not "Moses, Shepherd in the Wilderness."
- It was not "Moses, Spokesman for a Nation."
- It was not "Moses, Miracle Worker."
- It was not "Moses, Prophet."
- It was not "Moses, the Man Who Saw a Piece of God's Glory."
- It was not "Moses, Who Never Entered the Promised Land."
- At the end of it all, the title was simple: **Moses the servant of the LORD.**
 - i. This should be enough for us. We often say it, and it sounds humble to say it, but it is more difficult to

really live it. To be satisfied with simply being **the servant of the LORD** is a precious thing indeed. It is the happiest of all stations in life, for when the Master is glorified, the servants are satisfied.

ii. If one is truly a **servant of the LORD**, it can be demonstrated by a simple test: by how they react when someone *treats* them as a servant. Many are pleased to be servants for people of our own choosing or in circumstances of our own choosing. But that isn't really being **the servant of the LORD**.

b. **Moses the servant of the LORD died:** Moses died just as God promised. The promises of God are sure, including His more severe promises. It all happened **according to the word of the LORD**.

i. Literally, the phrase **according to the word of the LORD** means *upon the mouth of the LORD*. From this, ancient Jewish traditions say that Moses died as God took away his soul with a kiss. The medieval Jewish rabbi Maimonides wrote that of the 903 different ways to die, this was the best.

ii. According to ancient Jewish legends – which should be regarded *only as legends* – the death of Moses was tender and full of God's compassion.

"In the meanwhile, Moses' time was at an end. A voice from heaven resounded, saying: 'Why, Moses, dost thou strive in vain? Thy last second is at hand.' Moses instantly stood up for prayer, and said: 'Lord of the world! Be mindful of the day on which Thou didst reveal Thyself to me in the bush of thorns, and be mindful also of the day when I ascended into heaven and during forty days partook of neither food nor drink. Thou, Gracious and Merciful, deliver me not into the hand of [Satan].' God replied: 'I have heard thy prayer. I Myself shall attend to thee and bury

thee.' Moses now sanctified himself as do the Seraphim that surround the Divine Majesty, whereupon God from the highest heavens revealed Himself to receive Moses' soul. When Moses beheld the Holy One, blessed be His Name, he fell upon his face and said: 'Lord of the world! In love didst Thou create the world, and in love Thou guidest it. Treat me also with love, and deliver me not into the hands of the Angel of Death.' A heavenly voice sounded and said: 'Moses, be not afraid. "Thy righteousness shall go before thee; the glory of the Lord shall be thy rearward."'"

"With God descended from heaven three angels, Michael, Gabriel, and Zagzagel. Gabriel arranged Moses' couch, Michael spread upon it a purple garment, and Zagzagel laid down a woolen pillow. God stationed Himself over Moses' head, Michael to his right, Gabriel to his left, and Zagzagel at his feet, whereupon God addressed Moses: 'Cross thy feet,' and Moses did so. He then said, 'Fold thy hands and lay them upon thy breast,' and Moses did so. Then God said, 'Close thine eyes,' and Moses did so. Then God spake to Moses' soul: 'My daughter, one hundred and twenty years had I decreed that thou shouldst dwell in this righteous man's body, but hesitate not now to leave it, for thy time has run....I Myself shall take thee to the highest heavens and let thee dwell under the Throne of My Glory'....When Moses heard these words, he permitted his soul to leave him, saying to her: 'Return to thy rest, O my soul, for the Lord hath dealt bountifully with thee.' God thereupon took Moses' soul by kissing him on the mouth." (Ginzberg, *Legends of the Jews*)

iii. "As a mother takes her child and kisses it, and then lays it down to sleep in its own bed; so did the

Lord kiss the soul of Moses away to be with him for ever, and then he hid his body we know not where." (Spurgeon)

c. **And He buried him in a valley:** Notably, the LORD buried Moses. This was more complicated than it sounds because the devil contended with God over the body of Moses.

i. Jud 1:9 speaks of an occasion when *Michael the archangel, in contending with the devil, when he disputed about the body of Moses*. Apparently, there was a contention over the body of Moses, and according to Jude Michael the archangel won this contest as he appealed to the Lord's authority: "*The Lord rebuke you!*" Yet why Michael contended with Satan over the body of Moses is less clear.

ii. Some say that the devil wanted to use Moses' body as an object of worship to lead Israel astray into idolatry. Others think that Satan wanted to desecrate the body of Moses and claimed a right to it because Moses had murdered an Egyptian.

iii. But consider that God had another purpose for Moses' body, which Satan wanted to defeat: Moses appears in bodily form with Elijah (whose body was caught up to heaven [2 Kings 2]) at the Transfiguration (Mat 17:1-3); and perhaps Moses and Elijah are the two witnesses of Revelation 11.

iv. Apparently, God had a purpose to fulfill with the body of Moses before the time of general resurrection, so God made special provision to bury the body of Moses Himself. And, perhaps, God preserved the body of Moses in some way. God wanted to protect the body of Moses, so **no one knows his grave to this day**. Seemingly, they

searched for it (as would be expected) out of a desire to memorialize this great leader of the nation.

d. **Moses was one hundred and twenty years old when he died:** Moses' life was neatly divided into thirds. He spent 40 years as the crown prince of Egypt, 40 years as a humble shepherd in the wilderness, and 40 years leading the children of Israel to their destiny in the Promised Land. The first two-thirds were in preparation for the last one third. Moses was willing to let God prepare him for 80 years.

e. **His eyes were not dim nor his natural vigor abated:** This confirmed what was observed at Deu 31:1 (*I can no longer go out and come in*). Moses was not hindered by physical infirmity, but by the command of God.

f. **The children of Israel wept... the days of weeping and mourning for Moses ended.** As great as Moses was, the days of mourning for him ended. It was time to move on. God's program did not end with Moses, nor does it end with any man. The torch is passed, and God's work goes on.

B. The legacy of Moses.

1. (9) *Joshua's leadership in Israel.*

Now Joshua the son of Nun was full of the spirit of wisdom, for Moses had laid his hands on him; so the children of Israel heeded him, and did as the LORD had commanded Moses.

a. **For Moses had laid his hands on him:** Moses' prayer for Joshua was answered. Joshua was indeed **full of the spirit of wisdom.** Best of all, **the children of Israel heeded him.** The real test of leadership is to see if people actually follow you.

2. (10-12) *The unique legacy of Moses.*

But since then there has not arisen in Israel a prophet like Moses, whom the LORD knew face to face, in all the signs and wonders which the LORD sent him to do in the land of Egypt, before Pharaoh, before all his servants, and in all his land, and by all that mighty power and all the great terror which Moses performed in the sight of all Israel.

- a. **Since then there has not arisen in Israel a prophet like Moses:** Joshua was a capable leader for Israel, and God's work went on, but that did not diminish Moses' unique legacy.
- b. **Since then there has not arisen in Israel a prophet like Moses:** Several things made Moses unique.
 - i. **Whom the LORD knew face to face:** Moses was unique because of his personal intimacy with God. The term **face to face** does not literally mean "physical face to physical face," but it has the idea of free and unhindered communication. Moses had a remarkably intimate relationship with God.
 - ii. **All the signs and wonders which the LORD sent him to do:** Moses was unique in the number and kind of miraculous works he was associated with.
 - iii. **All that mighty power and all the great terror which Moses performed:** Moses was unique in the power and authority with which he led the nation of Israel.
- c. **Since then there has not arisen in Israel a prophet like Moses:** There were greater rulers over Israel than Moses, greater leaders, greater prophets, and greater priests. But before the coming of Jesus Christ the Messiah, there was never one man who held all offices so gloriously as Moses did.

i. "In him were concentrated all the great offices of Israel - prophet, ruler, judge and priest. If some who held these offices were great, Moses was the greatest of them all." (Thompson)